

**Women, welfare and the
nurturing of Afrikaner
nationalism :
a social history of the
Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue
Vereniging, c.1870-1939**

Marijke du Toit.

[S.l. : s.n.], 1996.

vi, 378 p., [26] p. of plates : ill. ; 30
cm.

eng eng

Summary in English.

Word processed copy.

Thesis is available electronically.

Thesis (Ph.D (History))--University
of Cape Town, 1996.

Bibliography: p. 363-377.

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.


Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Glossary</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Abbreviations</i>	<i>vi</i>

Introduction	1
--------------	---




Chapter One:

Prelude to Nationalism: Dutch-Afrikaans Women Entering the Public Sphere, c.1870-1900

<i>Illustrations</i>	16
Introduction	19
1. Silence and subordination? Contemporary observations of nineteenth century Boer women	21
2. 'Biddende moeders' ('Praying mothers'): Dutch-Afrikaans women and Dutch Reformed evangelicalism in the Cape Colony of the late nineteenth century	25
3. The absence of women in nascent Afrikaner nationalism, c. 1870-1898	47
 4. 'De Stem der Vrouw' ('The Voice of Woman') in the South African War: the origins of the ACVV	58
Conclusion	68

Chapter Two:

'Kerk, Volk en Taal' ('Church, People and Language'): The Early Years of the ACVV, 1904-1918

<i>Illustrations</i>	72
1. The founding of the ZACVV, its structure and leadership	80
2. 'A great deal of bitterness': the women's organisations and competing nationalisms after the war, 1903 - 1907	84
3. The philanthropic work of the ACVV from 1904 to c.1917	92
 4. Women organising for the <i>Taal</i> (Language)	95
 5. The changing discourse of maternal duty	98
 6. 'Moeders van het Volk' ('Mothers of the People') - the construction of a political identity	104

7. <i>Volksmoeders</i> and <i>mannelijke vrouwens</i> (Mothers of the people and manlike women): The ACVV and women's suffrage, 1907 - 1914.	109
8. The consolidation of <i>volksmoeder</i> discourse, 1914 - 1918	128
Conclusion	131

Chapter Three

Working Lives of Poor Whites in the Rural and Urban Cape, c. 1910 - 1939

<i>Illustrations</i>	133
Introduction	137
Part One: Rural Lives	
1. Patterns of landlessness and 'white' impoverishment in the Cape countryside, c. 1920-1929	140
2. Depression and options for survival in the 1930s	149
3. From wood to iron yokes: women's work and childbirth in the rural Cape	153
Part Two: Moving to the City	
1. Working class life in Cape Town, c. 1918 - 1939	165
2. Narrative, experience and the construction of identity	181
Conclusion	191

Chapter Four

'Die Bewustheid van Armoed' ('The Awareness of Poverty'): Afrikaner Women's Philanthropy during the 1920s

<i>Illustrations</i>	194
1. <i>Volksmoeders</i> and <i>nasionale vrouens</i> (nationalist women): ACVV leadership and the gender discourse of the 1920s	199
2. 'Bemiddelde dames', 'versukkelde vrouens' ('Well-off ladies', 'work-worn women'): ACVV members in the rural Cape	217
3. The ACVV's work on the Cape <i>platteland</i> of the 1920s	222
4. The ACVV and the making of 'Afrikaner' subjects in the Rural Cape	233
5. Fashioning 'Afrikaners' in the city: the ACVV's social work in Cape Town of the 1920s	237
6. Women's work and Cape Town's ACVV during the 1920s	245
Conclusion	255

Chapter Five

Programmes for 'Aankantmaak' ('Tidying up'): The ACVV's Work from 1928-1939

<i>Illustrations</i>	259
1. Philanthropy, education and promoting 'Afrikaner' culture in the 1930s	262
2. From 'deurmekaarwoon' ('mixed-up living') to 'gesonde behuising' ('healthy housing')	267
3. Opposing 'skadelike volksvoortplanting' ('harmful reproduction of the people')	276
4. 'Gevaarlike Moederskap' ('Dangerous Motherhood'): The ACVV and the management of childbirth	281
5. From <i>armmoeders</i> (poor-mothers) to <i>volksmoeders</i> ? Implementing the ACVV's maternity care programmes	293
Conclusion	302

Chapter Six

Dealing with Church and State: Afrikaner Nationalism and Gender Conflict in the 1930s

<i>Illustration</i>	307
Introduction	308
1. The gender dynamics of Afrikaner nationalist philanthropy: ACVV women, the church and state by 1928	309
2. 'Mede-arbeidsters van Staat en Kerk' ('Co-workers of State and Church')? ACVV women in the era of state welfare provision	312
Conclusion	344
Conclusion	349
<i>Bibliography</i>	363

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the Afrikaans Christian Women's Organisation (ACVV), placed within the context of Afrikaner nationalist activity, and traces the variety of ways in which white, Afrikaans, middle-class women sought to construct a racially exclusive 'Afrikaner' people. Stereotypical portrayals of Afrikaner women as passive followers of an ideology constructed by men are challenged.

The gendered construction of nationalism is initially examined by tracing the transition from a religious, evangelical, late nineteenth century gender discourse to an increasingly explicit Afrikaner nationalist discourse in the early twentieth century. The ACVV participated in the construction of a popular Afrikaner nationalist culture that portrayed Afrikaans women as mothers of the people or *volksmoeders*. The first ACVV leaders were acutely aware of the 'New Women' who abandoned conventional notions of femininity - they tried to construct a public, political identity for Afrikaans women that met the challenges of the 'modern' world, yet remained true to Afrikaner 'tradition'.

The ACVV sought to fashion Afrikaans whites into 'Afrikaners' through philanthropic activity. At first, this was especially true of rural branches, but from the early 1920s, Cape Town's ACVV also responded to the growing influx of 'poor whites' by focusing specifically on social welfare work. One particular concern was the danger that women working together with blacks posed for the *volk*. Research on the ACVV's philanthropy is complemented by a study of the lives of landless and impoverished whites in the Cape countryside and Cape Town. Archival material and 'life history' interviews are used to explore the working lives of white, Afrikaans-speaking women who moved from rural areas to Cape Town during the 1920s and 1930s.

Complex and contradictory strands made up the private and political lives of female Afrikaner nationalists. During the 1920s, they sought to create a political role for themselves by constructing a 'maternalist', nationalist discourse that articulated the notion of separate spheres for men and women but extended *vrouesake* (women's issues). In many ways these were conservative women - yet they adjusted, even challenged, conventional gender roles in Afrikaans communities. In the 1930s, the four provincial Afrikaans women's welfare organisations sought to shape state-subsidised social welfare programmes. The ACVV and its sister organisations had increasingly fraught dealings with Afrikaner nationalist men in the state and church who did not share the women's vision of female leadership in social welfare policy.

Acknowledgements

Writing this Ph.D. sometimes seemed to be a lonely activity, inspired by half-forgotten dementia. But completing it is due to a number of people's help and support.

Helen Bradford was that committed supervisor who inspires envy amongst fellow graduate students. She returned drafts almost too promptly, covered with comments both critical and humorous, and questions that stimulated further delving into the archives. She taught me much about writing, analysis and research.

Working in a relatively under-researched area of South African history makes for excitement as well as frustration. In the context of a general lack of peer studies, Lou-Marié Kruger's ground-breaking work on *Die Boerevrou* proved to be an invaluable reference point for my research. Our discussions about Mabel Malherbe and MER provided much pleasure. Lise van der Watt and I belatedly discovered our shared research interests - her work inspired my 'tapestry' metaphor. I greatly enjoyed my conversations about nineteenth century historiography with Karel Schoeman of the South African Library. I owe him thanks for helping with various obscure enquiries and for dating several photographs. I worked at a number of archives during the course of my studies, but am most grateful to Hanna Botha of the Document Centre at the University of Stellenbosch. She allowed me access to the excellently organised MER collection while it was still being catalogued, and helped me to locate elusive documents. The ACVV gave me permission to use their private archival collection and library. Fanie and Sophie Malan received me with great hospitality in Upington, helped with organising interviews, and provided my favourite snap-shot of my grandmother and great-aunt. The Cradock ACVV branch allowed me to peruse old minute books and letters, and located ACVV members for interviews. I also owe special thanks to the number of people who generously shared their life stories with a total stranger, and to Mrs Francina Wileman for allowing me to copy family portraits. Weeding out errors from the final, multi-lingual draft proved to be a major project in itself. Pat van der Spuy and Ingrid Weideman proof-read the English of the final chapters at very short notice. Prof Roy Pheiffer provided invaluable expertise in proof-reading the various forms of Dutch and Afrikaans.

I wish to acknowledge the financial support of the University of Cape Town's Research Committee. I also acknowledge the assistance of the CSD by incorporating the following declaration as requested: 'The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development

(HSRC, South Africa) towards this research is acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this work, or conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development'.

I owe special thanks for the support of a number of friends. Bastienne Klein participated in long discussions on my thesis and numerous other topics. Mimi Schoon made my stay in Pretoria a pleasure, and posted me various intriguing Afrikaans books. Jean and Emily Fairbairn were dear neighbours; Emily also helped enormously at the final stages of printing. Jill Wenman inspired me to new heights in my quest to transform old thesis drafts into useful, aesthetically pleasing objects. Ingrid Weideman gave much support when academic pursuit threatened to overwhelm me, and the loan of her car, cats and garden provided a sense of stability and welcome distraction. Fellow inhabitants and friends of 'The House' in Ash Street - especially Hildegard Fast, Permenthri Pillay, Sharmala Naidoo and Stewart Ting-Chong - became 'family' in the final years of my studies. Masha and Jeanne were wonderful sisters and companions, and my parents Maretha and André supported me emotionally and financially during crucial stages of the writing.

This thesis is in memory of my grandmother, Erica du Toit, herself a formidable worker for the ACVV.

Glossary

armblankes	poor whites
arme blanken probleem	poor white problem
armenhuis	poor house
armesorg	poor relief
Armesorg	DRC Poor Relief Committee
baas	owner, master
beschrijwingspunten	proposed resolutions
besoekkomitee	visitors' committee
bestuur	executive
biddende moeder	praying mother
bondsmanne	members of the Afrikaner Bond
broeder	brother
bywoner	sharecropper
dochters (dogters)	girls, daughters
dominee	minister of the church
domineesvrou	(church) minister's wife
hoofbestuur	head office, central executive
huisbesoek	house visits
huishoudschool	house-keeping school
huiswerk	house work, domestic work
jonge dochters	girls (young unmarried women not equivalent to the modern Afrikaans 'jong dogters' which refers to children)
jongejuffrouens	young, unmarried women
kerk, volk en taal	church, people and language
landsdiens	service to one's country
manspolitiek	men's politics
moeders	mothers
moeders en dochters	mothers and daughters
moeilike meisies	difficult girls
nooientjie	'lass', marriageable girl
nuwerwetse vrou	newfangled woman
opwekking	(religious) awakening
ou vrouens	old women, lay midwives
platteland	countryside
predikant	minister of the church
predikantsvrou	(church) ministers's wife
profiteerdery	profitmaking

sedelikheid	morality or virtue
suster	sister
susterskap	sisterhood
taal	language
tante/tant	aunt
trekboer	nomadic farmer
Vereeniging	society (often shorthand for ACVV)
vereenvoudiging	simplification (of High Dutch grammar and spelling)
verzoeningsbeweging	conciliation movement
volk	people (in the nationalist sense of the word)
volksake	issues pertaining to the people
volksgenote	fellow members of the <i>volk</i>
Volksgesondheid	People's Health
volkskongres	people's congress
volksmoeder	mother of the people
Volkswelsyn	(Department of) Social Welfare
voortsettingskomitee	'continuation committee' of the Volkskongres
vroueraad	women's advice
vrouesake	women's issues
vrouwen	women
vrouwen vergaderinge	women's meetings
vrouwen-stemrecht	women's suffrage
vrygrond	crown land
zuster	sister
zusterlijke briewe	sisterly letters

Abbreviations

ATV	Afrikaanse Taal Vereniging
BBV	Boere Beschermings Vereniging (Farmers' Protection Society)
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
FAK	Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuur Verenigings (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies)
FRMK	Federale Raad vir Moederkunde en Kindersorg (Federal Council for Mothercraft and Child Care)
FVR	Federale Vroue Raad (Federal Women's Council)
GNP	Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party (Purified National Party)
GRA	Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (Society of True Afrikaners)
NCCW	National Council of Child Welfare
NVP	Nasionale Vroue Party (National Women's Party, Cape Province)
SAVF	Suid-Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (South African Women's Federation)
VNP	Vroue Nasionale Party (Women's National Party, Transvaal)
VZB	Vrouwen Zending Bond (Women's Missionary Society)
ZACVV	Zuid-Afrikaansche Christelyke Vrouwen Vereeniging (South African Christian Women's Society)
ZAVF	Zuid-Afrikaansche Vrouwe Federatie (South African Women's Federation)
UP	United Party
SAP	South African Party

Introduction

Amongst the cultural relics enshrined by that symbol of an apparently obsolete Afrikaner nationalist past, the Voortrekker Monument, is a tapestry. This tableau of Voortrekker life stretches some 24 metres and easily rivals the stone relief work on the monument itself for intensive labour (3,353,600 stitches), scope of illustration and attention to detail. Completed in 1960, the embroidery could well be taken as a symbol for women's place in this heyday of Afrikaner nationalism. 'The Voortrekker Tapestry fulfills a very important function at the Monument' explained a brochure. 'While the Historic Frieze in the Hall of Heroes presents the political and military incidents of the Great Trek, the Tapestry highlights the domestic and cultural activities...' ¹ The history of the tapestry itself is also telling. It was made by members of the 'Vrou en Moeder Beweging' ['Woman and Mother Movement'] who raised the necessary funds. ² The women who painstakingly stitched the coloured thread were practising an appropriately domestic and traditionally female craft, but they executed a man's design and research. ³

Is this the story of Afrikaner women? Afrikaner nationalist and liberal historians alike have certainly portrayed men as the active agents of Afrikaner history, and women as the *Volksmoeder* figureheads of the movement. Books like A.P. Van Rensburg's *Moeders van ons Volk* (1966) built on a long-established tradition that enshrined women as pious mothers of the nation. ⁴ 'In wese is en was die Afrikanervrou nog nooit 'n politieke mens nie. Waar sy tot haar reg kom is op die liefdadigheidsterrein, met welsynwerk, in die opvoeding' ['In essence the Afrikaner woman has never been a political person. She comes into her own in

1 N. Kruger, *The Voortrekker Tapestry in the Museum of the Voortrekker Monument* (Johannesburg: The Board of Control of the Voortrekker monument, 1961), no pagination. For more information on the tapestry, see Liese van der Watt, 'Art, Gender Ideology and Afrikaner Nationalism: A History of the Voortrekker Tapestries' (M.A., University of Cape Town, 1996).

2 They were a subdivision of the *Afrikaanse Taal -en Kultuurvereniging* (Afrikaans Language and Cultural Society).

3 Kruger, *The Voortrekker Tapestry in the Museum of the Voortrekker Monument*.

4 A.P. van Rensburg, *Moeders van ons Volk* (Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, 1966). See also Die Gereformeerde Vroueblad (ed.), *Gedenkboek. Die Gereformeerde Vrou, 1859-1959* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom Herald, 1959). More recent examples are F. Van der Watt, *Ek Sien haar Wen* (Pretoria: Daan Retief Uitgewers, 1980) and A. De Villiers, *Barrevoets oor die Drakensberg. Pioniersvroue van die Neëntiende Eeu* (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1975). Early books in this vein include E. Stockenstrom's *Die Vrou in die Geskiedenis van die Hollands-Afrikaanse Volk* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1921), and *Die Boervrou - Moeder van haar Volk* (Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, 1918) by W. Postma. See Chapter Two for an account of the construction of *volksmoeder* mythology.

the field of charity, in welfare work and education'] explained the author.⁵ But for all their apparent symbolic importance, women were relegated to specialised hagiography; their contribution barely merited mention in Afrikaner nationalist historical and academic studies.⁶

The liberal historians who first offered an 'outsiders' perspective of Afrikaner nationalism presented a similar view of its female supporters. In his seminal study on 'Afrikaner civil religion', Moodie wrote that 'civil faith reserved a special place of pride for the figure of the Afrikaner woman'. For Moodie, man remained 'the instrumental agent who worked out God's will in Afrikaner history'. Woman 'provided a deep well of moral fortitude which complemented and even surpassed her husband's more practical exploits'.⁷ She was a symbol of purity and innocence, moral strength and patient suffering. But liberal historiography paid little attention to female nationalists. They merited three pages in Moodie's book; a subsequent study of Afrikaner nationalist mythology did not mention women at all.⁸

The transformation of South African historiography by neo-marxist historians who challenged earlier liberal interpretations of the past included a major study of Afrikaner nationalism. But O'Meara's materialist analysis of the rise of Afrikaner capital, published in 1983, was similarly silent on the topic of women. His analysis of the development of

5 Van Rensburg, *Moeders van ons Volk*, p.99.

6 Afrikaner hagiography included books devoted to the *volksmoeder*, but political and social histories mentioned women in passing or not at all. See for example J.A. Van Jaarsveld's *Die Afrikaner en sy Geskiedenis* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1959) and *Die Afrikaners se Groot Trek na die Stede* (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1982); also *Afrikaners in die Goudstad* (2 vols., Pretoria: HAUM, 1986), edited by E.L.P. Stals. G.D. Scholtz's eight volumes of *Die Ontwikkeling van die Politieke Denke van die Afrikaner* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers/Perskor, 1967-1984) scarcely mention women. In an equally lengthy party-political history, *Die Nasionale Party* (Pretoria: Academica, 1975), O. Geyser and A.H. Marais claim that Afrikaner women were active in politics from 1915 (Vol. 1, p.236). But the authors only mention their role in the 'Rebellie' against South Africa's participation in the First World War, and fail to mention the existence of the various provincial Women's National Partys. While Van Rensburg characterises Afrikaner women as 'essentially' apolitical, his *Moeders van ons Volk* ends with a chapter describing their heroic achievements on the political 'front' - i.e. party-politics - from the 1930s onwards.

7 T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom, Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p.17.

8 L. Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

Christian-nationalist ideology and the construction of an Afrikaner hegemony ignored the role of working women and female members of the petty-bourgeoisie.⁹

By 1985 then, historians of Afrikaner nationalism still neglected the situation and activities of women and hardly explored the gendered aspects of nationalist discourse. In this respect, their work reflected broader trends in South African and indeed international historiography. While 'women's studies' and feminist historiography grew exponentially in Europe and North America from the early 1970s and generated a considerable body of research, almost no works published by 1985 dealt with nationalism. The emerging literature on nationalism on the other hand, did not take cognisance of feminist research. With their innovative studies of nationalism, Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm contributed invaluable theoretical insights on the construction of ethnic and nationalist identities in the context of capitalist development and rapid social change.¹⁰ But this framework did not provide for a gendered analysis or an exploration of women's role in nationalist movements.

The writing of women's history by South African academics dated from the late 1970s. As Penelope Hetherington notes in her review of the literature in English, the (mostly white, English-speaking) contributors have almost all researched 'the related themes of black women's material and psychological oppression in South Africa and their resistance to that oppression'. She also notes that very few historians have made white women the subjects of their research.¹¹

9 D. O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 to 1948* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1983); L. Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity: Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the Volksmoeder discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919-1931' (M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1991), p.18.

10 T. Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain* (London: New Left Books, 1977); E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983); B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions, 1983); J. Breuilli, 'Reflections on nationalism', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 15 (1985).

11 Penelope Hetherington, 'Women in South Africa: The Historiography in English', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, 2 (1993), pp.169, 161. For discussions of feminist historiography and the literature on women and gender by South African scholars, see Belinda Bozzoli, 'Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9, 2 (1983). Also Cherryl Walker, 'Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945: An Overview' in C. Walker (ed.) *Women and Gender in Southern Africa* (Claremont: David Philip, 1990). As Hetherington points out, many women outside academe wrote about women before any professional historians did so.

However, when I began my research on Afrikaner women and nationalism in 1988, I did not embark on entirely uncharted terrain. A few feminist publications offered possibilities for comparison, notably Claudia Koonz's exploration of the contradictory position of women in Nazi Germany.¹² A fast-growing international literature on women in the churches and in welfare included Deborah Gaitskell's work on female mission initiatives and African women's prayer unions in South Africa.¹³ Shireen Hassim began to publish her research on the Inkatha Women's Brigade - a rare exploration of the construction of women's political identity in the context of ethnic nationalism.¹⁴ The histories of women published by left-wing women outside of academe included Betty du Toit's book on the struggles of female textile workers.¹⁵ Elsabé Brink and Iris Berger had also published papers on the working and home lives of white Afrikaans women active in trade unions; their studies would remain an important counterpoint for my research on female Afrikaner nationalists.¹⁶ Jonathan Hyslop's work on the Purified National Party's agitation for legislation against 'mixed' marriages and the creation of an icon of white female purity during the 1930s was a rare study of 'the gender interests at play' in Afrikaner nationalist politics.¹⁷ Karel

12 C. Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland. Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (London: Methuen, 1988).

13 Deborah Gaitskell, 'Female Mission Initiatives: Black and White Women in Three Witwatersrand Churches', 1903-1939 (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1981); Gaitskell and Judy Kimble, '"Wailing for Purity": Prayer Unions, African Mothers and Adolescent Daughters, 1912-1940' in S. Marks and R. Rathbone, (eds), *Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa* (London: Longman, 1982).

14 Shireen Hassim, '"Steel in their souls". The Inkatha Women's Brigade and the politics of gender in Natal' (paper presented at Biennial Conference of the Political Science Association of South Africa, 1991). See also 'Family, Motherhood and Zulu Nationalism: The Politics of the Inkatha Women's Brigade', *Feminist Review* 43 (1993).

15 B. du Toit, *Ukubamba Amadolo: Women's Struggles in the South African Textile Industry* (London: Onyx Press, 1978).

16 Elsabé Brink's studies of Afrikaans women who joined the Garment Workers' Union remains an important counterpoint to histories of female Afrikaner nationalists. See, for example, 'The Afrikaner women of the Garment Workers' Union, 1918-1939' (M.A. dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1986) and '"Maar net 'n klomp "Factory" Meide": Afrikaner Family and Community on the Witwatersrand during the 1920s' in Belinda Bozzoli (ed.), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987). Also Iris Berger, 'Solidarity Fragmented: Garment Workers of the Transvaal, 1930-1960' in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987).

17 J. Hyslop, 'White Working-Class women and the Invention of Apartheid: "Purified" Afrikaner Nationalist agitation for Legislation against "Mixed" Marriages, 1934-9', *Journal of African History* 36 (1995), p.60.

Schoeman's steadily expanding list of social histories and biographies - mostly published in Afrikaans - included information on Dutch-Afrikaans women in the nineteenth century.¹⁸ Afrikaans women from welfare organisations and university-based departments of Social Welfare had themselves published a few books that documented aspects of their work or the lives of working-class women.¹⁹

A few scholars had also pointed to the central importance of Afrikaans mothers to Afrikaner nationalism. Isabel Hofmeyr's 1987 essay 'Building a nation from words' provided a useful framework for more detailed studies. Hofmeyr argued that the success of Afrikaans cultural magazines like *Die Huisgenoot* was largely due to 'the family and women's position within it...' Cultural nationalists targeted Afrikaans mothers and outlined their proper role in a 'women's media'. Afrikaans was associated with 'the intimate terrain of the household'. While husbands still subscribed to an 'English labour political culture' by the mid-1920s, their wives had already internalised an Afrikaner identity by reading Afrikaans books and magazines.²⁰

Hofmeyr also suggested the importance of welfare organisations run by middle-class Afrikaner women whose constituency were 'poor Afrikaner women' and thus 'influenced sections of the poor who derived benefits from identifying and presenting themselves as "white Afrikaners"'.²¹ Here she was drawing on Jeffrey Butler's essay on Afrikaans

18 K. Schoeman, *In Liefde en Trou. Die Lewe van President M.T. Steyn en Mev Tibbie Steyn met 'n Keuse uit hulle Korrespondensie*, (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1983); *Olive Schreiner: a Woman in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1989). More recently, Schoeman has published *Die Wêreld van Susanna Smit, 1799-1863* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1995).

19 A long-time secretary of the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging, H.C. Lambrechts, wrote 'Die Eerste Vyftig Jaar: Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1956). See also E. Theron and H.C. Lambrechts, *Vrouevolksdiens* (Cape Town: HAUM, nd c.1956). M.E. Rothmann's *Ons Saamreis* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1930) was a short celebratory history of the ACVV. Her autobiography, *My Beskeie Deel: 'n Outobiografiese Vertelling* (Johannesburg: Tafelberg, 1972) also deals with her work for this organisation. Rothmann also wrote *The Poor White Problem in South Africa. Report of the Carnegie Commission, Part V: The Mother and Daughter of the Poor Family* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932), in which she documented the lives of poor white Afrikaans women. See also Erika Theron's informative study of white and 'coloured' Afrikaans female factory workers, *Fabriekwersters in Kaapstad* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1944).

20 I. Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity, 1902-1924', in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987), pp.113-14.

21 Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words', p.106.

women's welfare activities in a Karoo town. For Butler, 'Afrikaner women, acting outside the explicitly political realm ... frequently played an important part in defining Afrikaners as a self-conscious ethnic group...'22

Brenda Eisenberg's study of the Transvaal-based *Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie* (South African Women's Federation) likewise argued that the Afrikaner women who worked for this welfare organisation were politically motivated and 'worked devotedly' for the realisation of nationalist objectives.²³ *Woman-Nation-State*, a collection of essays that provided an international perspective on women and nationalism in 1989, included Deborah Gaitskell and Elaine Unterhalter's 'comparative analysis of nation, race and motherhood in Afrikaner nationalism and the African National Congress'.²⁴ More recently, Elsabé Brink acknowledged the role of Afrikaans women's welfare organisations in building Afrikaner nationalism in her paper on 'the ideology of the volksmoeder'. Brink examines the development of this 'notion of idealised Afrikaner womanhood' that 'came to form an integral part of emergent Afrikaner nationalism...'25

But for the most part, these accounts of women's participation confirm the validity of the tapestry metaphor. Afrikaans women are pictured as largely confined to domestic interiors, and as passive receptors of a nationalism constructed by men. 'What is striking about this early period' (c.1902-1929) wrote Brink, 'is the near-total absence of female voices ... in the construction of Afrikaner womanhood'.²⁶ Brink explains that '(o)ne of the means by which men in male-dominated societies control women is by giving them a well-defined but

22 J. Butler, 'Afrikaner Women and the Creation of Ethnicity in a Small South African Town, 1902-1950', in L. Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989), p.56; 'Afrikaner Women, Social Welfare and Education in a Small South African Town, 1920-1939' (paper presented at the International Conference on the History of Ethnic Awareness in Southern Africa, Charlottesville, 1983).

23 B.Y. Eisenberg, 'Gender, Class and Afrikaner Nationalism: the South African Vrouefederasie' (Honours dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987), p.33.

24 D. Gaitskell and E. Unterhalter, 'Mothers of the Nation: a Comparative Analysis of Nation, Race and Motherhood in Afrikaner Nationalism and the African National Congress', in N. Yuval-Davis and F. Anthias (eds), *Women - Nation - State* (London: MacMillan, 1989), pp.58-78.

25 E. Brink, 'Man-made Women: Gender, Class and the Ideology of the Volksmoeder', in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Claremont: David Philip, 1990), p.273.

26 *Ibid.*, p.281.

circumscribed position within society...' 'Female Afrikaner nationalists were 'man-made women' who accepted a *volksmoeder* ideal constructed by Afrikaner men.²⁷

important
Afrikaner women have also been entered into international feminist debate on gender and nationalism as figures of silent conservatism. Thus Gaitskell and Unterhalter suggest that an image of Afrikaner motherhood emphasising 'nobility, passivity, virtuous nurturing and protection of children' was 'shaped by male cultural entrepreneurs, the women themselves as silent as in their stereotypical portrayal'.²⁸ Their focus is almost entirely on Afrikaans women's support for nationalism within the home, although (so they argue) women did venture out to cast their votes when called upon to do so by their men.²⁹ The authors contrast this passivity and narrow domesticity to the apparently more assertive approach of female supporters of African nationalism in South Africa.³⁰

This image has been sustained in the context of the lively debate (and a burgeoning literature) amongst feminist scholars generated by the recent resurgence of ethnic conflict and nationalisms in Europe and the former Soviet Union.³¹ Anne McClintock drew on Gaitskell, Unterhalter and Brink's work in her theoretical exploration of the gendered nature of nationalism.³² McClintock's brief account of Afrikaner nationalism acknowledges that 'women played a crucial role' in its invention and suggests that 'in Afrikaner nationalism, motherhood is a political concept under constant contest'. But she offers no explanation and little evidence for such viewpoints. Seemingly, recognition of 'Afrikaner' women's active role is only important because their complicity in the exercise and legitimization of white domination should not be denied. In McClintock's analysis, women were still essentially subservient participants: 'White women were jealously and brutally denied any formal political power, but were compensated by their limited authority in the household. Clutching this small power, they became complicit in the racism that suffuses Afrikaner nationalism.'

27 *Ibid.*, pp.273, 281, 290.

28 Gaitskell and Unterhalter, 'Mothers of the Nation', p.60. I am partly indebted to Kruger's discussion of Brink and Gaitskell and Unterhalter in 'Gender, Community and Identity', pp.23-4.

29 Gaitskell and Unterhalter, 'Mothers of the Nation', pp.64-5.

30 *Ibid.*, pp.68-76.

31 *Gender and History* 5, 2 (1993) and *Feminist Review* 49 (1995) published a number of papers presented at conferences in 1992.

32 Anne McClintock, 'Family feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family', *Feminist Review* 44 (1993), pp.61-80.

Like Gaitskell and Unterhalter, she offers a more detailed analysis of how African women in South Africa 'embraced, transmuted and transformed' the ideology of motherhood.³³

The first in-depth study of female Afrikaner nationalists drew a very different picture of these women. Lou-Marié Kruger's Masters thesis, 'Gender, Community and Identity: Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the Volksmoeder Discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919-1931' (1991), provided a much needed historical account of Afrikaans women's public and nationalist activities from the early twentieth century to the end of the 1920s. The crux of Kruger's study was the work of journalist and political activist Mabel Malherbe and the discourse constructed in her women's magazine *Die Boerevrou*.³⁴ Kruger was not only the first feminist scholar to draw conclusions from detailed empirical research on Afrikaner women: her sensitive exploration of the 'Volksmoeder' discourse of the 1920s also explicitly challenged earlier depictions of Afrikaner women as passive or 'man-made'. Instead, she concluded that a number of Afrikaans women were active and influential participants in the construction of this ideology. She pointed to a 'basic contradictory tension' in Brink, Gaitskell and Unterhalter's work: 'While setting out to break the silence about women's role in history these feminist histories in fact stress the ways and extent to which women's identities, roles and actions are ultimately moulded by men'.³⁵ In terms of this argument, women who 'acted, joined organisations and assumed certain roles and identities in society' did so 'simply because these ... were useful to Afrikaner nationalism'. Nationalism (and particularly Afrikaner nationalism) is thus assumed to be 'a male discourse, shaped by males to serve the interest of males'.³⁶

Which portrayal of Afrikaner women is most accurate? I argue that Afrikaner women were neither absent from, nor silent partners of a male political movement. In fact, several decades ago some of the women active in welfare and party-political work themselves claimed a pivotal role in the nationalist struggle. Consider the perceptive comment on this

33 *Ibid.*, p.74.

34 See Chapter Four for more information on Malherbe.

35 Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p.25. Kruger draws on Sally Alexander's analysis of radical feminist history in 'Women, class and sexual differences in the 1830s and 1840s: some reflections on the writing of a feminist history', *History Workshop. A Journal of Socialist and Feminist Historians* 17 (1984), p.128.

36 Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', pp.24-5.

hidden history by M.E. Rothmann, herself a journalist, member of the *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging* (ACVV) and *Nasionale Vroue Party* (NVP):

Ek dink ek het gelyk as ek sê die ACVV het die eerste van almal organiserend opgetree in sake die Armoedskwessie onder Afrikaners. Maar vrouens werk so ongemerk; hulle help arm gemeentes en arm kinders waarvan min weet, so dat ons partykeer voel ons moet soek om hulle spore te sien. Dit is nie dat die spore nie daar is nie; maar vrouens se spore is maar lig, en hulle word so saam met die mans s'n getrap dat 'n mens hulle nie goed merk nie. Ek dink darem dat in baie plekke het hulle s'n eers daar gelê voor die mans, en die departemente en regeringskantore, daar gaan loop het - is dit nie waar nie?³⁷

[I think I am right when I say that the ACVV was the first to organise around the issue of poverty amongst Afrikaners. But women work so imperceptibly; they help poor communities and poor children that about whom few know, so that we must sometimes search for their footprints. It is not that the footprints are not there; however women's footprints are but faint, and they are made together with those of the men so that one does not notice them easily. I do think that in many places theirs were made before the men, and the departments and government offices went to walk there - is this not true?]

It is this claim to pioneering and essential work by Afrikaner women that I explore, these faint footprints that I seek to uncover. Like Malherbe and Butler, Rothmann described Afrikaner women as most active in welfare work. She would not have agreed that Afrikaner women were 'in essence apolitical' or that their work was 'outside the political realm'. I trace the ways in which female Afrikaner nationalists used private and public spaces for a very political purpose: to help build the Afrikaner *volk*. Kruger's work on *volksmoeder* discourse focuses most closely on the 1920s. In this detailed exploration of what Rothmann terms women's *ongemerkte werk* (imperceptible or unmarked work), I confirm her claim that women were no mere passive followers, and show how female nationalists participated in the construction of a gendered Afrikaner identity.

My initial forays into the archives showed that the meagre literature on Afrikaans women was not due to a lack of sources and possible topics for research.³⁸ But for me, as the

37 *Die Burger*, 'Oor die ACVV', 19 Jan. 1926.

38 For example, very little work has been done on the women's seminaries that drew Dutch-Afrikaans students from the late nineteenth century. The *Vroue Sending Bond* (Women's Missionary Society) and its publications have hardly been studied by historians. The work of the various provincial women's National Parties and the women's wing of the South African Party remain largely unexplored. The varied careers of some of the women involved would also make a fascinating study, notably that of the Transvaal *Vroue Nasionale Party*'s founder member, Johanna Brandt. Women's widespread participation in the *Helpmekaar* ('Help one another') movement that originated with the *Rebellie* of 1914 has also not been researched. From the 1920s, rural agricultural organisations (*Vroue Landbouverenigings*) formed an active network of women across the South African countryside. Like the welfare and party-political organisations, local organisations came

granddaughter of a woman who used to pride herself on being one of the first Afrikaans women to receive a diploma in social work, and who had a community centre in Cradock named after her, Afrikaans women's philanthropy remained an obvious choice. Ask almost any middle-class white *Afrikaanse vrou*, and she will be able to produce a mother, grandmother or aunt who belonged to one or other *vrouevereniging* - welfare work was a major area of public participation for Afrikaner women.

I thus chose to examine not only the gendered construction of nationalist discourse and identity, but also the organised activities of nationalist-supporting women who worked in welfare. However, unravelling this particular thread of Afrikaans women's history could mean traversing all of South Africa's provinces and several decades.³⁹ Hofmeyr, Brink, Eisenberg and Kruger focused on the Transvaal, so I decided to research an organisation active in the much neglected Cape province - the *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging* (ACVV).

My search soon made clear that to begin the story with the ACVV's founding in 1904 begged several questions. Why did a visible female leadership emerge in Dutch-Afrikaans society at this time? Who were these women? Where did their ability to organise and fluently express ideas about women's role and destiny come from? Answering these questions meant delving into the closing decades of the previous century and the turbulent history of the South African War. The chapter that resulted explores the religious, educational and political context from which the ACVV's early leadership emerged.

Subsequent chapters trace the organisation's activities through some thirty-five years. A study that traces Afrikaans women's philanthropic activities from the South African War to the days of the Great Trek commemoration in 1938 made historical sense. These were the years during which white middle-class Afrikaans speakers constructed Afrikaner nationalist ideolog(ies), created Afrikaans print media and began to popularise their ideas. A range of loosely affiliated (and sometimes vociferously oppositional) cultural, political, and welfare organisations were active in the 1910s and 1920s. As bitter political conflict escalated in the next decade, a more tightly structured and hierarchical movement also began to emerge - its successful mobilisation of Afrikaners was symbolised by the Great Trek celebrations.

together for annual congresses. Kruger has done the only study of an Afrikaans women's magazine (*Die Boerevrou*); others like *Die Huisvrou* (published from 1922) and *Die Moderne Vrou* (1936-1938) have not been investigated.

39 Throughout this thesis I use the provincial boundaries that applied during the period researched - the Transvaal, Cape, Natal and Orange Free State.

I first investigated the role women played during the initial years of constructing nationalist ideology. Chapter Two deals with the first fourteen years (1904-1918), and explores the changing ideas, activities and identities of the ACVV's leaders and members. My account of the construction of a public political identity for female Afrikaner nationalists examines the women's own articulation of their roles.

All of the ACVV's welfare work was directed at poor white Afrikaans speakers, and many programmes specifically addressed women's needs. My efforts to learn something about the lives of the recipients of ACVV help and those whose cultural and material existence the organisation tried to influence resulted in Chapter Three. Here I combined archival work with 'oral history' to recover the lives of poor whites in the rural Cape and in Cape Town. My subject is the interplay between economic and social processes that shaped and circumscribed the lives of poor Afrikaans whites, and specifically how social constructions of gender shaped women's lives. Because an important aspect of ACVV work was to investigate and intervene in the working lives of Afrikaans women, women's work was a central theme of my research. My special focus is on how female work experiences (on the land, at the farm homestead and later in Cape Town's working-class homes and factories) was shaped by economic circumstance.

Unless oral historians follow an exact and meticulous process of co-authoring the written result of research with their interviewees, they fracture recorded narratives to tell their own version in print. I somewhat reluctantly chose this latter option whilst trying to remain sensitive to issues of 'subjectivity' inherent in oral history research and writing. But I still wanted to tell the stories of individuals - their particular choices and experiences, their changing sense of who they were. To do this in separate sections dictated by chronological markers of economic and political change or the ACVV's own evolution would have resulted in a further fracturing of their stories. I therefore opted for a single chapter that primarily covers 1920 to 1939 but 'spills over' into the 1910s when my octogenarian interviewees remembered their childhood years.

The study of 'working lives' provide the context for the next two chapters on the welfare work of the ACVV. In Chapter Four, I explore the gender discourse that emerged in the 1920s and a new ACVV leadership's ideas about women's role in nationalism. An account of the organisation's membership in the rural Cape sets the scene for a section that deals with rural philanthropy and asks how successful this organisation was in constructing 'Afrikaner' identities and winning supporters for Afrikaner nationalism. I also demonstrate that Cape Town's rapidly growing Afrikaans working class prompted the ACVV to place a new emphasis on urban-based social work. Efforts to highlight and alleviate the home and

working lives of the white Afrikaans poor (and particularly women) combined with alarm at a perceived blurring of racial boundaries in 'mixed' working-class suburbs. Chapter Four shows how the ACVV's continued concern with these issues from 1928 to the late 1930s included a focus on female factory workers, and involved increasing emphasis on segregated residential space. I also examine the ACVV's efforts to provide maternity care for poor white women on the Cape *platteland* whilst furthering its Afrikaner nationalist goals.

These are some of the issues discussed in this thesis. But a thread that runs through the various chapters remains the question of middle-class women's allegedly minimal and passive role in a male-dominated movement. My account of the ACVV's work demonstrates women's active involvement. But it also raises complex questions about the extent and nature of women's organised activities in 'public' and 'private' spaces, and about the gendered construction of identity in the context of nationalism. When I discussed my research with Afrikaans women whose mothers or grandmothers belonged to a women's welfare organisation, conversation often turned on a seemingly pervasive paradox. They remembered strong women who devoted their energies to a conservative ideology that privileged men, wives with phenomenal abilities and itineraries who yet cosseted their men at home. Apparently, such active and assertive women were also far more evident in the first four decades or so of this century. Whether this was so was a question at the heart of this study.

Historians also tell us that the all-male *Broederbond* were behind efforts to mobilise Afrikaners from the late twenties.⁴⁰ Where were the women at this time? Early in my studies, I sensed that relations between organised Afrikaner men and women were not always harmonious. When I told my grandmother that I planned to work on ACVV documents in the Dutch Reformed Church's archives, the sharp retort from this devoted churchgoer was that 'they' had no material about 'us'. This hint at conflict between organised Afrikaans women and the exclusively male church hierarchy was confirmed when I started to go through the ACVV's official records and leaders' personal correspondence. In Chapter Six, the final chapter of my thesis, I draw together the threads of women's contradictory position in nationalism. I do so by looking at the dynamics between the women's welfare organisations and Afrikaans officials in the church and state during the 1930s, a decade of growing state-intervention to alleviate 'white' poverty.

40 O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, pp.61, 74-77; Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, pp.102-115.

A few aspects of this thesis call for specific comment. The first involves translation. Some historians of multilingual (con)texts may choose for fluency and against the accuracy of quotations in the original. This has certainly been the preference of most historians of indigenous African languages, who accept the consequent loss of meaning and nuance in the face of ignorance on the part of many academic readers. My choice to retain the original Afrikaans and Dutch has been more stubborn. Language is central to this study of Afrikaner nationalism - in Isabel Hofmeyr's apt phrase, the building of a nation from words.⁴¹ Often, the nuance and subtlety of a quote or phrase adds a richness of meaning to the 'narrative' of the academic text that is difficult to convey in English. The reader attuned to the subtleties of Afrikaans and Dutch will recognize the 'high Dutch' of church ministers, the colloquial Afrikaans of rural women, the awkward writing of semi-literates. Many Dutch and Dutch-Afrikaans quotations also contain typical spelling and grammatical errors, owing to influence from the spoken Afrikaans in everyday usage, and imperfect knowledge of standard Dutch. These passages have been transcribed with no attempt at correction. Readers who do not understand the original may refer to extensive translations in the text and a glossary of frequently used words.

Recent studies of the construction of colonial identity suggest that by the turn of the present century, most Dutch settlers defined indigenous peoples as 'Other'.⁴² Even so, the meaning that skin colour had for 'Afrikaans white' people varied according to their social circumstance, class status, religious identification, sense of community and political conviction. My work reflects the assumption that while race is a socially constructed category, most Dutch-Afrikaans speakers of (pre-dominantly) European descent had a certain consciousness of 'whiteness' at the end of the nineteenth century. But I try to show how Afrikaner nationalists sought to delineate a white *volk*, at a time when rapid social change created circumstances when their poorer *volksgeenote* were sometimes open to other ways of identification.

My use of the words 'Afrikaans' and 'Afrikaner' also needs explanation. In South African historiography 'Afrikaner' commonly refers to Afrikaans-speaking whites in general. While some revisionist scholars have challenged nationalist and liberal notions of organic nationalism with studies of the construction of an Afrikaner identity, most have retained this

41 Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words'.

42 Clifton C. Crais, *The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1991). For a comparative perspective, see Tessie Liu, 'Teaching Differences among Women from a Historical Perspective: Rethinking Race and Gender as Social Categories', *Women's Studies International Forum* 14, 4 (1991).

usage. Employed in this way, however, the term 'Afrikaner' obscures the constructed nature of Afrikaner nationalism, and perpetuates the myth of a monolithic Afrikaner tribe or nation. I have used 'Afrikaner' in a historically specific sense, to indicate those Afrikaans speakers who came to see themselves as belonging to the racially and linguistically exclusive imagined community of Afrikanerdom. When reference is made to 'white Afrikaans-speakers' or 'white Afrikaans women', skin colour and linguistic background - rather than identification with a particular politics or 'ethnicity' - is indicated.⁴³ In order to avoid cumbersome repetition, I sometimes refer simply to 'Afrikaans-speaking women' when I am specifically discussing 'whites'. References to 'Dutch-Afrikaans' speakers in my work on the late nineteenth century and early years of this century acknowledge that Afrikaans was not yet accepted as a language appropriate for public occasions.

My fourth comment concerns the emergence of a pervasive voice in the last three chapters. M.E. Rothmann, whose words I used earlier to illustrate leading Afrikaner women's awareness of their pivotal role in the construction of Afrikaner nationalism, played an absolutely central role in the ACVV. She was also that individual beloved of historians - a varied and prolific writer who kept private and official documents and made them available to the archives. Born a year before the first gold mine was opened on the Rand (she died in 1975) Rothmann's personal and professional life reflected the contradictions of an Afrikaner woman committed to a political ideal, yet intensely aware of the gendered nature of Afrikaner nationalist politics; a woman critical of Empire and the 'capitalist' exploitation of female factory workers, yet involved in the building of a white Afrikaner *volk*.

She therefore provided me with the opportunity to explore in detail an area of women's history that remains relatively under-researched. Feminist historians, in South Africa and elsewhere, have tended to shy away from studying women too easily dismissed as 'conservative'. Nancy McLean's comment that American women's studies have mostly focused on 'progressive politics and periods' and may thus have 'skewed our vision of the past in important ways' applies to South African historiography.⁴⁴ Jane Haggis has also

43 While Afrikaans-speaking whites in the rural Cape often saw themselves as belonging to communities loosely defined by church-affiliations, language and colour, their sense of community often failed to extend beyond local boundaries. Afrikaner nationalists constructed the 'imagined community' of Afrikanerdom by engaging with such regional senses of identity. This was an uneven process. (Even in the late 1930s, sociologists doing fieldwork in Namaqualand observed that people saw themselves as Namaqualanders rather than as members of the Union and resented the presence of outsiders, especially officials representing central government.)

44 Nancy McLean, 'White Women and Klan Violence in the 1920s: Agency, Complicity and the Politics of Women's History', *Gender and History* 3, 3 (1991), p.296.

cautioned against the dangers of a simplistically 'woman-centred' approach that fails to integrate 'the structural and ideological levels of colonialism into the analysis of white women's lives.'⁴⁵ She urges the development of a feminist scholarship that explores the varied ways in which femininities (and masculinities) are constructed 'around the power matrix of class, race and gender, arranged in particular patterns of hegemony'. She refers to Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's eloquent words in 'Placing Women's History in History' - words that also express the need for a detailed study of female Afrikaner nationalists:

the undervaluation of women has not only led to the slighting of women's participation in slave revolts, *jacqueries*, strikes and revolutions; it has also led to the slighting of their formidable contribution to the building of slave societies, the suppression of *jacqueries*.... The prevailing myth of woman-as-Other would encourage us to lump the wide range of women's experiences under the oppression of womanhood. But if we have learned anything, it must be that we must uncover the history of women in all its tragic complexity.⁴⁶

Were you to accept the stereotypical portrayal of Afrikaner women at face value, the Voortrekker Tapestry's history could indeed seem an apt metaphor for their role in South African history. But once you approach to look more closely, and begin to unravel the strands that make up the private and political lives of female Afrikaner nationalists, a more complex, contradictory and intriguing picture emerges.

⁴⁵ Jane Haggis, 'Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender? Recent Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13, 1/2 (1990), p.110.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, 'Placing Women's History in History', *New Left Review* 133 (1982), p.29. Haggis, 'Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender?', p.115.

Chapter One

Prelude to Nationalism: Dutch-Afrikaans Women Entering the Public Sphere, c.1870-1900



Plate 1. Carte de visite, c.1878. The portrait is probably of a well-to-do Cape Town woman (the photographer, S.B. Barnard, worked in the city).



Plate 2. Graduates of the Huguenot Seminary in Wellington, c.1878.

Chapter One

Introduction

On 14 April 1903, fourteen women met at the house of Cape Town *grande dame* Mrs Marie Koopmans-de Wet. The group included women of high standing in Dutch-Afrikaans circles, by virtue of marriages to men prominent in the Dutch Reformed Church. Johanna Marchand's husband ministered to the affluent Rondebosch congregation; Anna Steytler was married to *Dominee* (Ds) Steytler who led the town's 'mother church', the *Groote Kerk*. Elizabeth Roos was the wife of Johannes Roos, the procurator of the Dutch Reformed Church.¹ But while they were by no means out of place in the Koopmans *salon*, this was no mere social gathering. The women met for a political purpose: the formation of a women's organisation.

Prompted by news from the village Cradock in one of the eastern Cape's sheep farming districts that an *Afrikaansche Vrouwen Vereeniging* (Afrikaans Women's Society) was already several months old, the women decided to form a similar organisation.² By the time of its launch in September 1904 with Roos as president, the name had been elaborated to *Zuid-Afrikaansche Christelyke Vrouwen Vereeniging* (South African Christian Women's Society, hereafter ZACVV).³

The founding of a women's organisation in rural Cradock was also not an entirely isolated happening. By September 1904, apparently independently of the Cape Town launch but armed with a letter from Cradock, women in Somerset East had also started their own *vereeniging*. As the minutes noted (in English):

at a meeting of Afrikaander ladies held at the Eendracht Zaal it was decided to form a branch of the Afrikaner Vrouwen Vereeniging...⁴

1 Karel Schoeman, *Only Anguish to Live Here: Olive Schreiner and the Anglo-Boer War, 1899 - 1902* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1992), p.52. As Schoeman also points out, 'the patrician Mrs Marie Koopmans-de Wet ... conducted in her home in Strand Street the closest approximation to a European salon South Africa was ever to know...' (p.53.)

2 Cape Archives (hereafter CA), A1953 (Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging Private Collection), A1/1/1/1 (minutes of ZACVV meetings), 1904. Especially in the first years of its existence, exact dates were not always noted in the ZACVV's minute books.

3 CA, A1953, A1/1/1/1, 1904; *De Zuid-Afrikaan Vereenigd met Ons Land* (hereafter *De Zuid-Afrikaan*), 3 Sept. 1904.

What led to these events? The ZACVV's constitution expressed strong allegiance to the Dutch Reformed Church, and indicated support for cultural nationalists' demand for the promotion of *Hollandsche taal en volksgeschiedenis* (Dutch language and the history of the people). But Dutch-Afrikaans women were not known for their participation in public affairs. Traditionally, women were absent from the national political scene, and the public life of South African towns - educational, civic and religious - was almost entirely run by men.

Women's role in the construction and dissemination of Afrikaner nationalist ideology is very much a story of the twentieth century. In itself this is hardly surprising; the growth of a popular Afrikaner nationalism is also a phenomenon of the present century. But as Elaine Showalter aptly reminds us (although in a different context) 'century markers are only imaginary borderlines in time'⁵ - symbolic of the advent of new eras, but often false indicators of breaks with the past. The beginnings of Afrikaner nationalism may be traced back to the last three decades of the nineteenth century, to that other divider of eras in South African history - the discovery of gold and diamonds in the interior. From the 1870s, republican sentiments amongst groups of Boers in the interior and the nationalism of groups of Cape-based intellectuals constituted fragmented, contradictory and localised reactions to the British imperial sway.

Women were entirely absent from this Afrikaner ethnic politics. Even so, the story of the nationalist-supporting women's organisations was not entirely of the twentieth century. Founding members were in their thirties, forties and fifties - women whose political understanding and notions of gender had been shaped in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In fact, since a strong aspect of most nationalisms have been a static notion of 'tradition', some of the most interesting questions about women and nationalism concern the reconstruction of earlier gendered identities, the transformation of older traditions. What public or political roles - if any - did Dutch-Afrikaans women assume in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s? What processes and institutions shaped their notions of women's role in society? To what extent were Dutch-Afrikaans women who assumed public roles in the early twentieth century rooted in the practices of earlier decades? Did their actions constitute a fundamental break with the past?

4 CA, A1953, 1/12/1/1/1 (minutes of meetings, Somerset East), Sept. 1904. The original spelling has been used throughout.

5 Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), p.2.

1. Silence and Subordination? Contemporary Observations of Nineteenth Century Boer Women

The historian of Dutch-Afrikaans women in the nineteenth century has few accessible and obvious source materials. In her review of nineteenth century texts, Lou-Marié Kruger discusses the occasional remarks of male travellers and social commentators; a lone female voice analysing women's situation belongs to Olive Schreiner. Although her focus is on pre-industrial Transvaal, Kruger's analysis provides useful comparative material, especially since information on women in the Cape is even more scarce. Were Boer women of the interior republics politically active? Travellers reported that 'formally' Boer women were relegated to the domestic sphere. But they were also said to have some influence beyond this domain and to be 'informally' active in the public sphere.⁶ Thus Transvaal women had a keen interest in political matters and apparently played a powerful political role in the 1881 independence war.⁷

Because of the general silence about women's political activity, Kruger attaches 'special interest and significance' to the confrontation in 1843 between a delegation of Boer women led by minister's wife Susanna Smit and the Natal high commissioner. This rare example of public action certainly provides important clues to *voortrekker* women's political role. The story of Boer women's refusal to accept British rule in Natal was first popularised by anti-imperialist history books of the late nineteenth century. However, the high commissioner's own report showed that the women (who locked him into his office for two hours) demanded the franchise and political rights for themselves.⁸

Such behaviour contrasted sharply with stereotypes of acquiescent, apolitical females. However, the context of fragmented and isolated Boer communities and the tenuous links

6 Lou-Marié Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity: Women and Afrikaner nationalism in the Volksmoeder discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919-1931' (M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1991), p.111.

7 *Ibid.*, p.112. Kruger relies on Olive Schreiner's *Thoughts on South Africa* for comment on Transvaal women's role in the 1881 war.

8 *Ibid.*, p.110. An example is F.W. Reitz's *A Century of Wrong* (London: Review of Reviews, 1899), p.13. The book was first published in Dutch as *Een Eeuw van Onrecht*. From the late nineteenth century supporters of the Boer republics reconstructed this episode into a story of Voortrekker women vowing to walk 'barrevoets oor die Drakensberge' ['barefoot over the Drakensberg'] rather than to submit to British rule. This heroic tale of Afrikaner women's resistance to imperialism later became a centre-piece of *volksmoeder* symbolism. But see A.P. Van Rensburg, *Moeders van ons Volk* (Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, 1966), who presents the account of women's demand for political rights within the framework of their opposition to Empire rule.

between *trekkers* and Dutch-Afrikaans speakers in the Cape Colony warn against generalising from this example of female assertiveness on political terrain.

Kruger links women's informal influence in public affairs to the fact that women's work were not limited to a narrowly defined domestic sphere. Quoting Olive Schreiner, she suggests that unlike most female English speakers in South Africa, Boer women shouldered a large part of productive work on the farms. While they mostly worked close to the homestead, women in pre-industrial South Africa often worked alongside their menfolk. For Schreiner, the influence and interest of Boer women extended beyond the domestic sphere; women advised their husbands 'over all matters of domestic economy and external business'.⁹ This view probably reflects her frequent idealisation of Boer communities. Even so, a degree of fluidity in the gendered division of work in pre-industrial Boer societies may well have existed.

Karel Schoeman has also contrasted the relative independence of Dutch-Afrikaans women in the Colony to the more circumscribed existence of their English counterparts. Boer women who lived relatively isolated lives on the eastern frontier faced dangers, farmed and often took the initiative, 'albeit mostly in the shadow of a man, be it father, guardian, husband or son'. Women thus 'developed a high degree of independence and set their own norms of conduct, untrammelled by the conventions of nineteenth century Europe'. As a striking example of 'bold, impetuous' Boer women he quotes Merriman expressing surprise in 1852 at 'so many Dutch farmers' wives cantering into town astride on men's saddles ...' and Bishop Armstrong's description of a horserider he encountered in Cradock two years later: 'a huge, short, massive Dutch woman, riding her horse like a man, (a common custom, as I afterwards found), her petticoats spreading like vast sails on either side'. This incongruous image hardly suggests individuals comfortably adapted to African summers. Even so, dress codes dictating that female bodies be hidden in restrictive volumes of (preferably black) cloth did not prevent these women from confidently ranging beyond a narrowly defined domestic sphere ('I must say, they managed by tying them to keep down their petticoats in a marvellous way...')¹⁰

Accounts of Dutch-Afrikaans women's lives in the previous century are quickly exhausted. For Kruger, this apparent lack of interest is in itself telling. Silence about Boer women in

⁹ Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p.107, quoting Olive Schreiner, *Thoughts on South Africa*.

¹⁰ Karel Schoeman, *Olive Schreiner: a Woman in South Africa 1855 - 1881* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1991), p.210.

the literature of nineteenth century South Africa 'amounts to the absence of a comprehensive discourse dealing specifically with women and women's roles before 1900.' Kruger suggests that '(t)his silence about women and absence of specific gender discourses indicates that women, gender and gender roles were not important issues at this time. Gender roles, such as those which traditionally consigned women to the private and domestic spheres, were either not challenged or were not considered to be essential.'¹¹

Kruger's conclusion seems to relegate South Africa to a colonial backwater unaffected by changes in gender relations elsewhere in the world, including the British metropole. In England (and continental Europe) the 1880s and 1890s were decades of ferment and uncertainty as far as gender roles were concerned. *Fin de siècle* culture in England was dominated by perceptions of a crisis in gender relations, and images of New Women who dangerously challenged established notions of women's place.¹² Apparently such fears were hardly echoed in South Africa of the late nineteenth century. Women like Olive Schreiner who questioned and discussed gender roles were rare exceptions and found intellectual peers in England rather than South Africa.

But perhaps the possibility of outside influence should be considered more carefully, especially since other discourses of the late nineteenth century were clearly influenced by broader trends within the Empire. As André du Toit has argued with regards to Afrikaner nationalism:

The social and intellectual history of colonial discourses cannot be studied in their terms only. Not only did colonial settlements transplant fragments of cultures and traditions rooted in the parent societies, but colonial traditions too did not develop autonomously in some relatively self-contained political and ideological universe. Culturally and ideologically the imperial power and metropolitan centre continued to be of primary significance to colonial developments...¹³

This, one could argue, also holds for gender discourses in the colonial context. A full understanding of women's role and the way this is discussed (or not discussed) must take cognisance of prevalent discourses in the metropolitan centre.

In fact, it would be a grave mistake to typify the nineteenth century as a period without change in gender roles. The picture of Boer women that emerge from nineteenth century

11 Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p.103.

12 Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, pp.38-40.

13 André du Toit, 'An Also Chosen People?' (mimeo, 1994), p.8. See also his discussion in the final version of this paper, 'The Construction of Afrikaner Chosenness' in W.R. Hutchison and H. Lehmann (eds), *Many are Chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), pp.120-21.

writers' descriptions is not only elusive and fragmented but, if taken on face value, deceptive in its elision of change. South Africa was an agrarian backwater compared to industrialised England, but the late nineteenth century showed accelerating economic change that would also present women with new options.

Rendering such change visible requires research ranging more broadly than existing work. Kruger rightly links women's participation in production and control of productive resources to their public participation. However, the significance of Dutch-Afrikaans women's absence from formal political structures in the Cape Colony should also be weighed against the great political apathy exhibited by their menfolk for most of the nineteenth century. Only a handful of well-to-do Dutch-Afrikaans farmers and businessmen participated in formal political structures dominated by English-speaking merchants. Before the discovery of diamonds boosted parliament's revenue and the granting of responsible government in 1872 increased its powers, most Dutch-Afrikaans farmers had little interest in a system that hardly affected their lives. Even in 1878, a first attempt at political mobilisation amongst western Cape farmers was greeted with hostility.¹⁴ When men did not bother to exercise their franchise, women's lack of interest in the vote was hardly a clear indicator of gender roles.

The question of women's public participation should also not be narrowly centred on political structures. Attempts to explain women's continued absence from formal politics in the 1880s and 1890s, when increasing numbers of farmer husbands in the western Cape organised or supported political pressure groups, may also blind the researcher to women's actual public roles. After all, South African women would be legally excluded from formal participation in political structures well into the twentieth century. And while women in England, North America and elsewhere were agitating for the franchise in the late nineteenth century, they were also challenging their exclusion from various social institutions and organising around a range of issues besides suffrage. Spheres of public participation for women were typically church-related mission or welfare activities.¹⁵

14 Hermann Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1870-1915', *South African Historical Journal*, 19 (1987), pp.118-19. According to Giliomee, a canvasser in 1869 found that nine tenths of farmers younger than twenty-six in his division had not bothered to register as voters. Dutch-Afrikaans speakers comprised roughly two thirds of the Cape's population by 1870, but between 1850 and 1870 only a third of parliamentary representatives were Dutch-Afrikaans (p.118).

15 In *Women and Philanthropy in nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), F.K. Prochaska examines the variety of charitable institutions in which middle-class women participated. He also points to women's strong presence in Christian missionary societies and church-based philanthropy. *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), edited by Kathleen D. McCarthy, explores the ways in

For Dutch-Afrikaans women, the extent of their public participation in society could well be judged by their role in the Dutch Reformed Church, an institution that underwent significant change in the course of the nineteenth century, and also presented women with new opportunities. As women assumed new roles in a modernising society, new discourses also emerged: gendered discourses that adapted notions about female duties prevalent elsewhere in the British empire.

2. 'Biddende Moeders' ('Praying Mothers'):

Dutch-Afrikaans Women and Dutch Reformed Evangelicalism in the Cape Colony of the Late Nineteenth Century

In the early nineteenth century, women had few options for actively expressing religious devotion. Some arranged informal visits to the sick and poor. More rarely, wealthy women contributed financially to welfare work, but their influence was often limited and churchmen could take decades to execute their projects.¹⁶

This was not only because women had no formal say in church matters. Hierarchical structures and an authoritarian 'Calvinism' allowed little room for individual and spontaneous religious expression.¹⁷ Ministers were typically foreign-born Scots or

which 'giving and voluntarism have traditionally provided ... the means through which women have grasped, wielded and maintained public power...' Anne Firor Scott's essay in this volume, 'Women's Voluntary Organisations: from Charity to Reform' traces the links between early benevolent associations and nineteenth century organisations through which women aimed to bring about social reform. This is also a theme in Jane Rendall's *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860* (Macmillan: Hampshire, 1985).

16 A. Dreyer, *Historisch Album van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid Afrika* (Cape Town: Cape Times, 1912), pp.128-9.

17 A number of historians have explained the origins of Afrikaner nationalism in terms of a 'Calvinist Paradigm'. They assume that a coherent tradition of 'primitive Calvinism' can be traced back to the religious beliefs brought to South Africa by seventeenth century Dutch settlers. More recently, much of the historical evidence and theoretical basis of this explanation of modern Afrikaner nationalism has been questioned decisively. In 'No Chosen People: the Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology', *American Historical Review* 88, 4 (1983), André du Toit traces the construction of this myth and argues that the beginnings of Calvinism amongst Afrikaners may only be traced from the late nineteenth century. Moreover, no coherent, mainstream or continuous 'Calvinist' tradition can be traced through to neo-Calvinist ideology of the 1930s. See T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom, Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975) and I. Hexham,

Dutchmen paid by and politically aligned with the colonial state. Church councils would in fact remain oligarchic structures appointing their own members for the greater part of the nineteenth century. The Colony also had a sparse supply of churches and farming families tended not to participate in any organised religious activity outside of occasional church services.¹⁸

By mid-century however, some changes were evident. As capitalism slowly spread through parts of the Cape, the DRC began to establish a more effective presence outside the handful of older towns. By 1850, the colony's forty-five villages were 'usually centred around the Dutch Reformed Church, with a few traders, a school, and sometimes a local bank ... the number of DRC congregations had increased from fourteen in 1824 to forty-nine in 1854'.¹⁹

Accelerating economic change from mid-century also promoted the growth of 'regular' society in the countryside. Subsistence farming would long be practised in areas like the north-western Cape, but market-oriented farming became more common in some regions, notably the eastern districts. A more centralised colonial administration that promoted improved roads, harbours and postal services facilitated greater economic integration with the world economy.²⁰

The DRC now experienced substantial growth, with a sharp increase in the number of functioning congregations. The Cape Synod became an increasingly influential institution in public life, a local theological seminary was established at Stellenbosch and for the first time Dutch-Afrikaans ministers of religion began to take key positions in the church next to their

'Totalitarian Calvinism - The Reformed (Dopper) Community in South Africa, 1902-1919' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Bristol, 1975).

18 Robert Ross, 'The Fundamentalisation of Afrikaner Calvinism', in Herman Diederiks and Chris Zuispel (eds), *Onderscheid en Minderheid: Sociaal-historische Opstellen over Discriminatie en Vooroordeel aangeboden aan Professor Dik van Arkel* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1987), p.210. From at least the 1820s to the 1840s, reports from DRC ministers to their superiors often mentioned that many, sometimes most farmers did not observe 'huiselyke Godsdienst' ['family devotions'] (CA, Archives of the Dutch Reformed Church (hereafter DRC), R (Staat der Godsdienst), 3/2 (for the year) 1838, (DRC of) Graaff-Reinet, pp.17-18; R3/2, 1840, Somerset, p.257; R3/5, 1848, Graaff Reinet, p.51). Every 18 months, Dutch Reformed Church councils had to send 'religious reports' to their superiors at the regional 'ring' or convocation, dealing with the spiritual and temporal welfare of their congregation.

19 André du Toit, 'The Cape Afrikaners' Failed Liberal Moment', in J. Butler, R. Elphick and D. Welsh (eds), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), p.37.

20 *Ibid.*, 'The Cape Afrikaners' Failed Liberal Moment', p.38.

Dutch and Scotch brethren.²¹ In fact, the church was establishing itself as a major social institution on the Cape *platteland* (countryside):

In the relatively undeveloped and undiversified colonial society, the Dutch Reformed Church was one of the few, if not the only, major institutions which, in principle, encompassed the majority of the population. Along with the spread of functioning congregations by the mid-century throughout the Cape interior came increasing opportunities for social communication and control. Church councils, which had control of much of the few available resources, also played a key role in the founding of new dorpe (towns), which coincided with the setting up of new congregations.²²

Significantly for the church, these years also saw the beginnings of a 'print culture' amongst Dutch-Afrikaans speakers in the Cape as compulsory schooling was introduced, high schools (for boys) founded and the number of circulating newspapers and journals increased.

This was the context for significant change in the nature of religiosity from the 1860s: growing conflict between 'liberal' and 'orthodox' camps of churchmen, and the development of a fundamentalist, evangelical brand of Calvinism.²³ While the liberals were powerless to reform the church from within and dislodge oligarchic control, the old order in the DRC did not simply reassert itself.

The younger members of 'orthodox' families traditionally powerful in the DRC oligarchy, the Hofmeyrs, Murrays and Neethlings, were not untouched by new influences. As students in Holland, they had been drawn to a revivalist movement that emphasised conversion, personal piety and evangelical mission work. Now they opposed the liberals on matters of doctrine, but simultaneously proceeded to modernise and transform religious practice and institutions:

These well-educated young men were not rooted in traditional rural communities or restricted to localized resources; they were highly mobile, skilled organizers and enthusiastic conference-goers, trying to reach a wider audience ... [they] were proficient publicists, making fluent and effective use of newspapers, journals, and pamphlets and generating new forums as they went along. Though they styled themselves 'orthodox' in their theological and doctrinal positions, this younger generation was thoroughly of the modern world in its organizational mode, its means

21 Du Toit, 'The Construction of Afrikaner Chosenness', p.128.

22 Du Toit, 'The Cape Afrikaners' Failed Liberal Moment', p.50.

23 Du Toit has researched the development from mid-century of 'liberal' and 'orthodox' tendencies in the Dutch Reformed Church'. While the first generation of Dutch-Afrikaans speakers who studied theology in the Netherlands in the mid-1840s and early 1850s insulated themselves from secular and liberal influences at the Dutch universities, subsequent generations were more open to new cultural and intellectual influences. From the 1860s, controversies raged between 'liberals' and 'conservatives' in the DRC around such issues as the relation between church and state and the election of church elders. See 'The Cape Afrikaners' Failed Liberal Moment', especially pp.51-63.

of communication, and its methods of popular mobilization ... [the effects of the orthodox project] ... were to transform the traditional patterns of DRC church practices and religious sensibility almost beyond recognition.²⁴

The 'new' orthodoxy took over the DRC synod from 1857 and proceeded with a range of innovations. With Andrew Murray²⁵ in charge, the church's missionary endeavours were revitalised. A wide range of religious publications aimed at a popular audience was launched. These included *De Wekker* (The One who Awakens), a monthly concerned with missionary work, and the similarly inclined bi-weekly newspaper *De Volksvriend* (The People's Friend).

The sermons by these *predikanten* (church ministers) had 'an unwonted evangelical urgency and pietist emphasis on personal conversion'.²⁶ DRC officials had previously acted firmly against sporadic expressions of more pietist and popular evangelical traditions amongst lay members to assert the discipline and control of the DRC. In contrast, the younger generation of Hofmeyrs, Murrays and Neethlings cultivated and responded to popular expressions of evangelicalism. In fact, a development that had a major impact on the success of the orthodox project was an unprecedented and dramatic revivalist movement that spread throughout the Cape in 1860 and 1861.²⁷

While the revival was apparently spontaneous (although its origins remain largely unexamined by historians), the orthodox grouping's own well publicised Worcester conference in 1860 had anticipated and encouraged events. Instead of opposing *opwekking* (awakening) with disciplinary measures, the new orthodoxy now proceeded to give the

24 *Ibid.*, p.59.

25 The Murray clan dominated the DRC for much of the nineteenth century. Andrew Murray inherited the name of his father, also a prominent minister of the DRC who emigrated from Scotland.

26 Du Toit, 'The Cape Afrikaners' Failed Liberal Moment', p.60.

27 Although localised revivals also occurred in 1874, 1884 and 1885, none were as widespread as that of 1860-1861. Popular religious awakenings started in the agricultural areas of the south-western Cape and spread north and east through the Karoo, affecting at least twenty-five parishes in the Cape and Orange Free State. The *opwekking* was fuelled by emotional prayer meetings that took place outside of formal church services, and the response of *predikanten* more used to a disciplinarian Calvinism was certainly ambivalent. During one such meeting Andrew Murray, a leading figure in the new orthodoxy, vainly tried to quell the uproar, first proclaiming 'I am your minister sent by God, Silence', and when this failed, by storming out of the meeting shouting: 'God is a God of order, but this is disorder.' (Ross, 'The Fundamentalism of Afrikaner Calvinism', p.213.)

movement official sanction, and to incorporate aspects of spontaneous religious expression into regular church practice.²⁸ As Du Toit argues,

The result was a historic watershed in the development of the DRC. In many ways, the characteristic traditions of DRC piety and religious sensibility can be traced to this time. The incorporation of the revival movement into regular church practice unleashed a vital source of emotional and spiritual energy.... Prepared to risk a certain kind of democratization of the church in terms of allowing more scope for individual and popular piety, this group of modernizing clergy succeeded in blunting and diverting that groundswell of resistance to oligarchic structures on which the liberals depended...²⁹

To what extent did *opwekking* and the new evangelicalism of the DRC transform women's religious experience, and offer new opportunities for female religious expression and activity? Official DRC histories are virtually silent on women's role in the church during the nineteenth century.³⁰ So far, studies of the revival also neglect to examine women's participation - but do claim that the new orthodoxy subsequently also involved women in DRC activities.³¹

But the Protestant evangelical tradition that inspired Murray and his colleagues had involved the participation of large numbers of women in spontaneous and organised religious activities. Women's influence had been critical in the spread of the New England and British religious revivals and evangelicalism that preceded similar *opwekking* in the the Cape by some sixty years - movements that crucially shaped religiosity in nineteenth century England and North America.³² Evangelical literature paid particular attention to the role of women

28 Du Toit, 'The Cape Afrikaners' Failed Liberal Moment', p.62.

29 *Ibid.*

30 For an official history of the DRC, see Dreyer, *Historisch Album van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid Afrika*. Histories of the church's missionary work include G.L. Van Heerde, *Die Dag van Kleine Dinge* (Cape Town: NG Kerk Uitgewers, 1955); D. Crafford, *Aan God die Dank* (Pretoria: NG Kerk Boekhandel, 1982). An exception that does focus on women is J.M. Cronjé's *Vroue met Nardusparfuum* (Pretoria: NG Kerk Boekhandel Transvaal, 1984). The *Vroue Sending Bond* also celebrated its own role in mission work in (for example) A.J. van Wijk's *Na Vyf-en-Sewentig Jaar, 1889-1964* (Cape Town: Vroue Sending Bond, nd c. 1964).

31 Du Toit, 'The Cape Afrikaners' Failed Liberal Moment', p.60; G.E. Hugo, 'Die Voorgesiedenis van die Godsdienstige Herlewing op Worcester in 1860 - 1861' (B.D. dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1952), p.68.

32 In *The Origins of Modern Feminism*, Rendall discusses the predominance of women in the New England Great Awakening between 1798 and 1826. In *The Politics of Domesticity* (Middletown Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981) Barbara L. Epstein similarly argues that women played an instrumental role in fostering revivals in America. Rendall also suggests that

in society, an attention which steadily grew as more women writers identified themselves with the cause'. Moreover, evangelicalism in Europe and North America also involved a far-reaching 'feminisation of religion'. This was a 'religion of the heart', no longer 'arid and rational'. The qualities of the reborn Christian were qualities conventionally accepted as 'quintessentially female': humility, self-denial, submission, obedience. A religion that described Christ in similar terms and made him a personal saviour had undoubted appeal for women.³³

A detailed study of how *opwekking* involved women and shaped female religious experience in the 1860s is beyond the scope of this study. Women certainly participated in the religious revival that swept towns and even farm districts throughout the Cape. It is difficult to gauge the extent of women's participation in the general prayer meetings characteristic of the revival, although women were present. Several church councils also reported that well-attended daily gatherings were supplemented by additional meetings held separately by 'de mannen, vrouwen, jongelingen, jongedochters en kinderen' ['the men, women, young men, young women and children'].³⁴ From 1860, local women's organisations dedicated to mission work also sprang up in towns throughout the Cape.³⁵

The revivalist movement thus helped stimulate initiatives through which numbers of women participated in activities soon sanctioned and institutionalised by the DRC. The extent to which women were themselves involved in this process has been obscured by historians attributing to DRC ministers the initiative and work of their wives. An elderly member of the Worcester congregation later paid tribute to Johanna Murray, wife of the prominent DRC minister, by recalling the first women's prayer meeting she attended during the revival:

in roughly the same period, women played a fundamental role in the growth of an evangelicalism that cut across denominational boundaries in Britain.

33 Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism*, pp.73-4.

34 This report came from Montagu in the western Cape. Other church councils, for example from Wellington, Robertson and Riversdale sent similar reports. Wellington reported a proliferation of prayer meetings: 'Brothers, Sisters, Young people, yes even children, who come together to worship in prayer and song, and to read and discuss God's Word.' CA, DRC, R2/7, 1860, Montagu, p.290. See also R1/9, 1860, Wellington, p.235; R2/6, 1860, Robertson, p.292; R2/6, 1860, Riversdale, p.386. My translation from the original Dutch.

35 For example, in 1860 the Montagu church council reported the founding of a 'sister's association in order to help expand God's kingdom amongst the heathen'(CA, DRC, R2/6, p.289) Similar reports were sent from Riversdale and Heidelberg Swellendam (*ibid.*, 1861, p.386; R2/7, 1864, p.264).

toen de zusters der gemeente voor de eerste maal in de Pastorie bijeenkwamen tot het gebed, en zij door ongewoonte huiverig waren om overluid te bidden, [werden] zij zoo getroffen ... door haar gebed, dat zij niet langer konden zwijgen.³⁶

[when the sisters of the congregation gathered for the first time in the parsonage for prayer, and they were hesitant to pray aloud because it was new to them ... they was so struck by her [Mrs Murray's] prayer that they could no longer remain silent.]

The writer quoting this testimony, herself long involved in Dutch-Afrikaans women's missionary endeavours of the nineteenth century, contradicted claims that male *dominees* (church ministers) started the women's and children's groups that sprang up from the 1860s. The Worcester meeting was the first 'moeder-bidstond ... waaraan alle moeder-bidstonden hun oorsprong te danken hebben' ['mother's prayer hour from which all other mother's prayer hours originated']. Mrs Murray was also '(b)eide te Worcester en te Kaapstad ... de eerste om kinder-werkgezelschappen voor de zending op te richten...' ['both in Worcester and in Cape Town ... the first to start children's groups for missionary endeavours...']³⁷ Very likely, she also founded women's mission support organisations in the western Cape - she would certainly play a leading role in this movement for the next two decades.³⁸ Other ministers' wives were also central to the existence of similar groups elsewhere. In Swellendam, the *zusterswerkgezelschap* (sisters' work group) lost its drive 'zedert den betreurden dood van de geachte Echtgenote des Leraars, die altoos hierin als voorgangster werksaam was' ['after the death of our minister's respected wife, who had always taken the lead'].³⁹

A central feature of Protestant evangelicalism in Britain and North America was women's participation in a network of voluntary associations.⁴⁰ The new evangelical style of the DRC similarly offered women new opportunities to participate more actively in religious life. Women's groups were soon closely linked to the church, and divided their funds between mission work (amongst black 'heathen') and the local church.⁴¹ The proliferation of Sunday schools, *werkgezelschappen* (work groups), prayer circles, children's and youth groups offered women new opportunities for active participation in the church. Memorials in church magazines provide rare glimpses into the activities of exemplary sisters. By 1893

36 A.H. Spijker, *De Geschiedenis van den Vrouwen Zending Bond of wat God Gewrocht Heeft, 1889 - 1906* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia Drukkerij, nd c.1906), p.25.

37 *Ibid.* Her role is also emphasised by Cronjé in *Vroue met Nardusparfuum* (pp.13-14).

38 She was the president of the *Vrouwen Zending Bond* (see below).

39 CA, DRC, R2/7, 1864, Swellendam, p.242.

40 Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism*, pp.78, 93-94.

41 CA, DRC, R2/7, 1864, Montagu, p.100.

Tante (Aunt) Nelie Viljoen had been a stalwart for the local DRC since her thirty-ninth year:

In de Zondagschool arbeidde zij als onderwyzeres voor de laatste 17 jaren ... Voor de zending had de overledene een open hart en hand ... Als voorgangster van een Zusters Biduur heeft zij dat met Hulp des Heeren gedurende 17 jaren staande gehouden; en wie zal Tante Danelie nie missen in tijd van ziekte!⁴²

[For the past seventeen years she taught Sunday school ... The deceased had an open heart and hand for missionary endeavours ... She led the Sisters' Prayer Hour for the past seventeen years. And who would not miss Aunt Danelie in times of illness!]

It was especially from the 1870s that significant numbers of women played new and visible roles in the religious life of Dutch-Afrikaans communities. The context was a general trend amongst the more well-to-do farmers and Dutch-Afrikaans petty-bourgeois to send their girls to high schools. Historians of Dutch-Afrikaans communities in the late nineteenth century have linked a shift in favour of higher education to economic change. The relative absence of industry before the 1870s had meant that there was 'little demand for universal literacy', and 'education itself was held in low esteem'. In the Cape, improved educational facilities and higher levels of school attendance was apparent from the 1850s.⁴³ In the last three decades of the century however, accelerating economic change brought a new appreciation of formal education amongst Dutch-Afrikaans speakers. The very poor still showed little interest in education and many farmers still regarded basic literacy skills as sufficient. Many better-off farmers and townspeople now believed that their daughters and sons should receive a high school education, and sent them to a number of new schools founded throughout the colony.⁴⁴

42 *De Kerkbode*, 'In Memoriam, Mev. de Weduwee WJ Viljoen', 10 Feb. 1893, p.42. Also *De Christen*, 'In Memoriam Louisa Adriane', 2 Feb. 1883, pp.52-53.

43 With the introduction of state-aided public schools from 1843, the number of children at school had rapidly increased. Fewer than 4000 children attended school in 1842 (2 800 whites); by 1870 more than 40 000 children were at school (18 000 whites). Even so, education was still held in low esteem. In the Cape, only 43 per cent of white children between the ages of five and fifteen were literate by 1875. (Du Toit, 'The Cape Afrikaners' Failed Liberal Moment', p.39; Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism', 1870-1915, p.116.)

44 Edna Bradlow's essay 'Women and Education in Nineteenth-Century South Africa: The Attitudes and Experiences of Middle-Class English-speaking Females at the Cape' in the *South African Historical Journal* 28 (1993) provides a short history of women's education in the nineteenth century. From the 1870s, governesses and 'Ladies Seminaries' run by 'distressed gentlewomen' were rapidly replaced by high schools often run by English and Scottish teachers (p.132).

Unfortunately, government sources provide no statistics on how many girls and young women attended school between 1874 and 1918. The few available statistics on women graduates do suggest a huge growth in the number of women attending high school. 'Certificates of competency' were issued to 3 women and 6 men in 1873, and 74 women (24 men) in 1884.

But the trend towards higher education for Dutch-Afrikaans girls was largely due to the realisation of an ambitious educational project fostered by the DRC. At Andrew Murray's instigation, over forty American women came to South Africa between 1873 and 1887. The Huguenot Seminary was founded in 1874 in the western Cape town of Wellington (home of Murray's own congregation). Similar institutions were soon established at Stellenbosch, Worcester, Graaff Reinet and Swellendam - while Huguenot was transformed into South Africa's first women's college in 1898. By 1896, Abbie Ferguson, the founder of Huguenot Seminary, could plausibly claim that 'it is almost universally understood, even if the right is not openly acknowledged, that girls are to have the same advantages enjoyed by their brothers...' ⁴⁵

In 1873, Murray justified his project by arguing that women were eminently suitable for educating children, and that improved opportunities for women's education were therefore crucial. In this respect, he articulated ideas similar to those of nineteenth century educationists in Europe who emphasised the task of women as moral teachers and socialisers of their own and others' children. ⁴⁶ Murray also linked changing attitudes towards women's work and education to economic trends:

Bij de toenemende welvaart van ons land, en de behoefte, die er is aan den arbeid van alle handen, zullen langzamerhand de vrouwen ook menige werkzaamheid op zich nemen, die tot hiertoe geheel aan de mannen was overgelaten... ⁴⁷

'Certificates with honour' were issued to 8 women (3 men) in 1873, and 33 women (2 men) in 1885. The Huguenot Seminary's annual publication indicated that between 1874 and 1896, 1 088 women graduated from this institution alone. Most of them were Dutch-Afrikaans. Most prospective teachers qualified at school where they received training in addition to regular schooling. Various teaching certificates were issued to school leavers at this time. Most of the young women who left with St IV and a 'third class certificate' had no intention of teaching. A middle or second class certificate could be obtained after two years and was regarded as the equivalent of matric. Until the early twentieth century, universities at the Cape ran matriculation classes that prepared students for the university entrance exam.

990 white females (1 909 males) were 'engaged in the Learned Professions, in literature or art or science, with their immediate subordinates' in 1875. Very likely, the great majority of women were school teachers. In 1891, only 1 069 men were 'ministering to education' in the Cape colony, but the number of women had tripled to 3 148. (Annual reports of the Superintendent-General for Education; Blue-books of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope; Cape of Good Hope Census of 1891; E.G. Malherbe, *Education in South Africa, 1652-1922* (Cape Town: Juta, 1925), pp.147-53; *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 1896.)

45 *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 1896, p.5.

46 Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism*, p.109.

47 *De Wekker*, May 1873, pp.34-5.

[With the increasing prosperity of our country, and the need for work from all hands, women will also slowly take many labours upon themselves that have hitherto been entirely left to men...]

But as might be expected from a scheme initiated by the leading figure in the DRC's missionary wing, Murray's project had specific religious intent. As Dana Robert has argued,

Andrew Murray's solicitation of teachers from Mt Holyoke was ... not only an attempt to raise the educational level of Afrikaner girls, but was a plot to plant evangelical piety and support for home and foreign missions among the women of the Dutch Reformed Church.⁴⁸

The model for all the schools founded co-operatively by American teachers and Dutch Reformed clergy was Mount Holyoke, a women's college in Massachusetts. Founded in 1837 and one of the first women's colleges in the United States, Mount Holyoke sought to provide women with a solid academic education while imbuing them with evangelical activism.⁴⁹

In fact, because the girls' schools drawing Dutch-Afrikaans pupils were founded on the initiative of the DRC, the new interest in education directly influenced Dutch-Afrikaans women's participation in missionary activities. Formal education provided young women with a range of new skills. Indeed, 'American and South African women in partnership ... provided for the first South African women missionaries and professional educators'.⁵⁰ By 1887, the Huguenot Seminary had sent out 600 women as teachers and 61 graduates as missionaries, including single women missionaries. Graduates were mostly drawn from fairly well-off farming families and petty-bourgeois townspeople, but the DRC also sponsored poorer girls. Significantly for the seminary's influence in Dutch-Afrikaans communities and the church, many graduates married DRC ministers.⁵¹

The impact of Murray's project should not be underestimated. For the first time, Dutch-Afrikaans women - together with independent-minded American women - had the space and resources to organise themselves. Teachers and graduates from the seminary played a crucial role in the rapid development of a network of women involved in missionary work, whether in fund-raising and support, or as actual missionaries. The Huguenot Missionary Society (HMS) was founded in 1878, and created a network of alumni maintaining contact

48 Dana L. Robert, 'Mount Holyoke women and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission Movement, 1874 - 1904', *Missionalia* 21, 2 (1993), p.108.

49 *Ibid.*, p.107.

50 *Ibid.*, p.104.

51 *Ibid.*, pp.103-4; *Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 1896, pp.27-50.

throughout South Africa. It was through the auspices of this society that women missionaries were supported - in fact, priority was given to single rather than married women. From 1886, the HMS printed a Dutch version of a mission newsletter sent to pastor's wives. In 1889, the society expanded to become the first national organisation for Dutch-Afrikaans women, the *Vrouwen Zending Bond*. Founded in 1889 on a national basis and under the auspices of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Women's Missionary Society had largely Dutch-Afrikaans members and by 1898 already linked 48 local societies across South Africa.⁵²

But women from the DRC were not only involved in efforts to convert the heathen. The latter years of the century also saw women organising in another field - although on much smaller scale. In the 1880s, women were commended for their philanthropic activities - caring for the sick, feeding the poor, teaching them how to read.⁵³ This was a role long played by some women in the church. A minister's widow from Cape Town, 85 years old when she died in 1883, was remembered for taking on 'bijzondere vrouwelijke plichten' ['particularly female duties']. Her *Dames Weldadig Genootskap* (Ladies Benevolent Society) combined care for the poor's 'tijdelijke ... maar ook eeuwige belangen' ['temporal ... but also eternal well-being']. In addition to support for mission work, she was credited with helping to found an association that provided clothes for the poor, and contributing to the establishment of the Dorcas *armenhuys* ['poorhouse'] in Cape Town.⁵⁴ This establishment was run by a committee of women, most of them prominent ministers' wives.⁵⁵ From 1887, the Huguenot Missionary Society also started philanthropic projects amongst poor whites in Kimberley. By the 1890s they ran similar projects in Johannesburg.⁵⁶

To what extent does the fact of Dutch-Afrikaans women's church-related activities challenge existing views of women's public role in the late nineteenth century? One could argue that their participation in church structures was so severely circumscribed that it hardly signified a change in gender relations. Women were still excluded from the formal structures of the DRC. Women did not preach in DRC churches, sit in the local church councils or the

52 Robert, 'Mount Holyoke Women and the Dutch Reformed Mission Movement', p.120.

53 *De Christen*, 3 March 1882, pp.101-2.

54 *Ibid.*, 27 July 1883, p.346.

55 *De Kerkbode*, 23 May 1890, p.167.

56 Spijker, *De Geschiedenis van den Vrouwen Zending Bond*, pp.5-9.

synod. Participants in the prayer circles and *werkgezelschappen* met in the privacy of their homes, not in public. At the opening of the female-run Dorcas *armenhuis* (poor house), men made the speeches while women listened.⁵⁷ Moreover, women hardly challenged the prevalent view that their place was at home.

And yet, the prayer circles and local *werkgezelschappen* to support missionary endeavours of the 1860s, women's access to education and (to some extent) independent careers, and the development of a network of women involved in mission work from the 1870s - clearly these were important aspects of Dutch-Afrikaans women's entry into the developing civil society of the Cape.

That the growing number of female high school graduates and active participants in the DRC visibly changed gender roles in Dutch-Afrikaans communities is also clear from the emergence of a religious discourse articulating specific ideas about women's place in society. This was in itself an important development that would significantly affect educated Dutch-Afrikaans women's self-perception.⁵⁸

A 'feminisation' of religion and the exaltation of qualities usually associated with females may well have contributed to Dutch-Afrikaans women's role in the revival of the 1860s and their subsequent initiatives in organising prayer circles and mission support. But for the first decade or so after the *opwekkings*, Dutch religious journals, including the publications of the DRC's evangelical wing, rarely indicated its intended audience as female. Women only incidentally featured as mothers, housewives or widows in occasional children's stories. When launched in 1859, *De Wekker* was proclaimed 'een godsdienstig blad voor allen' ['a religious paper for everyone'] but at first neglected to specifically address women. A decade later however, the editors began to take note that women were amongst its readers and

⁵⁷ *De Christen*, May 1883.

⁵⁸ It is likely that the journals had a large readership amongst men and women actively committed to church and mission work. *De Christen* was the DRC's official journal until it was replaced by *De Kerkbode*. These were ministers' sources of information on synod proceedings, official announcements, church policy, biblical discussions and sermons from leading theologians. Ministers' wives and women involved in mission support work or prayer circles most probably had regular access to copies. *De Wekker* of Feb. 1895 claimed that 6000 copies were distributed every month. The editor, whose wife and daughter were ardent supporters of mission work and contributors to the journal, also appealed specifically to women to find more subscribers. Very likely, the 'zusters' involved in mission support work already distributed the majority of copies. Figures from the early twentieth century showed that most distributors were female. Moreover, leading ministers' wives and women active in welfare organisations throughout the Cape used and adapted this discourse from the early twentieth century. Compare my discussion on how religious notions of women's role were adapted by female Afrikaner nationalists in Chapter Two.

distributors: 'Geachte vrienden en vriendinnen, die *De Wekker* lezen en verspreiden' ['Respected men and women friends, who read and distribute *De Wekker*'] read a notice in 1870.⁵⁹ 'Broeder, Zuster! Geloof gij in der Heer Jezus?' ['Brother, Sister! Do you believe in the Lord Jesus?'] asked a writer calling for religious revival in 1871.⁶⁰ Articles intended specifically for women also began to appear - sporadically from 1870, and with increasing frequency in the 1880s and 1890s.

The gender discourse emerging in the DRC's religious journals tell us less about the actual activities of Dutch-Afrikaans women, and more about the ideals constructed for women at this time of changing religious sensibility and gender roles. During years when women were taking up more active - albeit still circumscribed - roles in the church, writers emphasised the virtues of quietly and modestly expressed piety. A memorial in *De Christen* celebrated the ideal woman:

Wat de dichter van de roeping der vrouw in't algemeen zingt, is ook bij uitnemendheid van Mej. Zahn waar geweest: 'Meest op'd achtergrond van't leven is haar schoon-tooneel bereid;/ In uw Liefelijke schemering, dienende bescheidenheid'.⁶¹

[The poet's celebration of woman's calling aptly describes Miss Zahn: 'Her lovely contribution was mostly prepared in life's background;/Self-effacing service in Your beauteous twilight.']

The 1870s and 1880s were decades when access to higher education first made careers as missionaries or teachers a possibility for Dutch-Afrikaans women. For some women at least, marriage was no longer necessary for economic survival. Increasing numbers of Dutch-Afrikaans brides were also not dependent girls leaving their fathers' house for the first time, but young women with the experience of independence that some years of teaching fostered.

Within the language of the religious journals however, marriage and motherhood were women's only destinations and possibilities. Rendall's description of the 'complex and ambiguous' effect that nineteenth century evangelical Christianity had on the position of women in Europe and North America also applies to the religiosity promoted by the DRC. It exalted 'what were seen as their essential qualities', and defined 'their own sphere more clearly, offering a limited but positive role within the movement itself'.⁶²

⁵⁹ *De Wekker*, Dec. 1870, p.111.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Feb. 1871, p.118.

⁶¹ *De Christen*, 3 March 1882, p.101.

⁶² Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism*, p.73.

It was as mothers and at home that women were to live out their evangelical fervour. 'Moeders! Bidt gij voor uwe kinderen?' ['Mothers! Pray ye for your children?'] queried a writer in 1870.⁶³ As another explained,

daar [hangt] oneindig veel, ja alles van af, welke de eerste indrukken zijn die gij aan hun gemoed geeft ... al wat gij aan uwe kinderen doet, draagt vruchten als gij reeds in het koude graf ligt ... De moeder van Samuel was eene *biddende moeder*, zoo ook de moeder van Timotheus. Heeft uw kind ook eene *biddende moeder*?⁶⁴

[So much, indeed everything, depends on the first impressions that you give to a child ... everything you do to your children will bear fruit when you lie in the cold grave ... The mother of Samuel was a *praying mother*, as was the mother of Timothy. Does your child also have a *praying mother*?]

De Wekker carried many such articles about the importance of religious instruction for small children that emphasised the crucial role of mothers. Even more important than the physical care of children was 'de geestelijke vorming en opleiding voor het hoogere' ['spiritual instruction and shaping for the higher good'] claimed a DRC minister in 1882.⁶⁵ 'Als de moeder niet voor de ziel van haar kind zorgt, wie zal het doen?' ['If mothers do not tend the souls of their children, who will?'] asked a writer in *De Kerkbode* of 1892.⁶⁶

Poems and stories in the journals idealised and celebrated 'moederliefde' ['motherlove'], and emphasised the power of 'biddende moeders' ['praying mothers'] to win their childrens' souls for God. In a story from *De Wekker*, a mother vainly asked her son not to go drinking and playing cards. She promised to pray for his soul through the night; unable to bear the thought of her vigil he returned and was converted.⁶⁷ In a tale from *De Christen*, a mother died after using her own clothes to warm her child during a snowstorm. Years later, her son remembered and was converted. Another from 1885 featured a dying soldier telling a missionary that he was saved because his mother once taught him to pray, and asking him to cut off a lock of his hair for her. His last words were - 'mijne moeder! Mijne moeder!' ['my mother! My mother!']⁶⁸ A poem published in 1893 likewise combined the

⁶³ *De Wekker*, Dec. 1870, p.111.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Dec. 1870, p.111 (original emphasis).

⁶⁵ *De Christen*, 29 Sept. 1882, p.454. See also 21 Sept. 1882, pp.454-55.

⁶⁶ *De Kerkbode*, 8 July 1892, p.221; *De Wekker*, July 1898, p.1.

⁶⁷ *De Wekker*, July 1889, p.4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, April 1885, p.28; *De Christen*, 15 Sept. 1882, pp.434-5. Also *De Christen*, 14 April 1882, p.173; *De Christen*, 8 Dec. 1882, p.578.

message that motherhood and saving their children for Christ was women's ultimate calling with a promise of lasting veneration from their offspring:

Mijn moeder, beste gaaf, die God
Mijn Teed're kindsheid schonk ...
Wie ooit een plaats wint in mijn hart,
Neen, u verdringt niet één,
U in wie op't eerst, op moeders schoot
Gods liefde mij verscheen⁶⁹

[My mother, best gift that God
gave my tender childhood
Whoever wins a place in my heart
no, none will ever usurp
You in whom first, on mother's lap
God's love appeared to me]

But in spite of this idealised and restrictive emphasis on motherhood, there was some acknowledgement and even approval of women taking on new roles. In some stories, women now belonged to philanthropic societies or mission-supporting organisations.⁷⁰ Religious journals sometimes acknowledged the new roles claimed by women - while also rendering them acceptable as extensions of motherhood. Thus a founder member of the Dorcas *Armenhuis* was 'een moeder ... voor de armen' ['a mother ... for the poor']. Similarly, a white missionary's wife was the 'moedermeesteres' ['mother-teacher'] of her black pupils.⁷¹

Occasionally, new gender roles were accepted with less ambivalence. Thus *De Christen* reported admiringly on Ettie Schreiner, 'vurige kampvechtster voor de zaak van afschaffing' ['fiery champion of temperance'], speaking in public.⁷² Stories about religious revivals in England featured lay women preachers (although usually overshadowed by their ordained male brethren).⁷³ In a letter to his congregation published in 1882, Andrew Murray also explained the Salvation Army's belief that it was women's right to praise God and bear witness in public. Murray's discussion reflected the DRC's rejection of female authority in the church. Women, he explained, could still not interpret scripture. Women's silence at formal gatherings was not at issue - but their active, outside participation could reach the unconverted.

⁶⁹ *De Wekker*, April 1893, p.4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, June 1887, p.24; March 1892, p.2.

⁷¹ *De Kerkbode*, 31 Aug. 1888, p.279; *De Wekker*, Jan. 1886, p.3.

⁷² *De Christen*, 25 June 1880, p.237.

⁷³ *De Wekker*, June 1885, p.34.

De kerk lijdt groot schade door de vrouw niet de gelegenheid te geven ook voor te gaan en te spreken, al is het niet in de groote samenkomsten van de gemeente tot leering, dan toch in de vrijere waar aan onbekeerden wordt gearbeid. Niemand die ze gehoord heeft of hij zal moeten toestemmen dat menigmaal de woorden der vrouwen, die op de onbekeerden een beroep deden, of getuigden van hare eigene redden, of om Gods genaade smeekte, zeer treffend en aandoenlijk waren...⁷⁴

[The Church suffers great damage through not giving women the opportunity to also go to the front and speak out. Even though this does not apply to the large meetings of the congregation, then certainly outside where the unconverted are belaboured. No one who has heard them will deny that very often women's words - when appealing to the unconverted, or bearing witness that they themselves were saved, or beseeching God for mercy - were very striking and movings...]

The idealisation of motherhood and ambivalent acceptance of women's new roles in Dutch religious journals at the Cape certainly resembled trends in European and North American Protestant evangelicalism. Indeed, stories and religious tracts were often copied from overseas religious journals. From the 1870s another more conservative trend was also evident as articles on the respective duties of husbands and wives began to appear. Like their American and European counterparts, DRC ministers emphasised both female moral superiority and the boundaries of women's sphere.⁷⁵ At first, their writing affirmed male authority, but the emphasis was more on domesticity and the importance of 'home' as the enclave of the family. *De Wekker* of April 1871 explained 'hoe men een gelukkig huisgesin vormen kan' ['how one can build a happy family']. Husbands, 'de band des huises', ['the bond of the house'] were told to invest in domestic comforts (books, an armchair, pictures for the wall), to spend time at home with their wives, to discuss family matters. Wives were urged to keep their home neat and clean, and to await their spouses 'met een vriendelijk gelaat' ['with a friendly countenance'].⁷⁶ A poem from 1880 placed the duties of husband and wife in the celebrated context of 'home':

O Zalig huis! Waar man en vrouw vereend
In eenen geest,
Naar's Heeren Wetten handlen...⁷⁷

[Oh Blessed house! Where man and woman united
One in spirit
live out the Lord's Laws...]

⁷⁴ *De Christen*, 24 Nov. 1882, pp.551-52.

⁷⁵ Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism*, p.79.

⁷⁶ *De Wekker*, April 1871, p.126.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Aug. 1880, p.48.

This celebration of domesticity was probably related to the growth of Dutch-Afrikaans petty-bourgeois, small-town society in which the clergy played an important role.⁷⁸ Tessie Liu has also argued that 'the Victorian cult of domesticity in the colonial world must be seen in the context of demarcations between groups'. It elevated white women to civilisation's guardians whilst confining them within narrow spheres.⁷⁹ But from the 1880s, the religious discourse of the DRC explicitly reflected churchmen's concern that women should maintain their proper place in the gender hierarchy. Men prominent in the church began to publish careful explanations that female subservience in the family was sanctioned by God. If a general concern about 'sexual anarchy' was lacking in South Africa, churchmen certainly drew on conservative British texts to assert the divine origin of male authority. Writing from Aberdeen in 1882, DRC minister Von Wielich expounded on male authority in the family. While a happy marriage was characterised by mutual consultation between spouses, the husband was unequivocally in command:

[de man] ... heeft als hoofd des huizes het bestier, de leiding en het gezag van al de leden in handen. Zijn wil moet wet zijn, waaraan allen zich met bereidwillige gehoorzaamheid moeten onderwerpen...⁸⁰

[As the head of the household the husband is the master, the leader and the authority over all family members. His will must be law, to which all must subject themselves with willing obedience...]

An article in *De Kerkbode* of 1894 - translated from English and by one James Smith - was even more explicit. Discussing Ephesians 5:22 ('Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord'), the writer explained that woman's duty was to obey her husband and to ensure his comfort. In fact, male happiness was dependent on female subservience:

78 In *Family Fortunes; Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 1988), Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall argue that one of the strongest strands binding together the English 'middling' classes 'was the commitment to an imperative moral code and the reworking of their domestic world into a proper setting for its practice'. If women were not at first confined within this domestic sphere, the home was 'strongly associated with a form of femininity which was becoming the hallmark of the middle class...' (p.25.)

79 Tessie Liu, 'Rethinking Race and Gender as Social Categories' in *Women's Studies International Forum* 14, 4 (1991), p.272. Liu argues that 'bifurcated visions of womanhood' were characteristic of colonial societies. Women of European descent were elevated to the guardians of white civilisation. The 'structure of colonial race privileges focused particularly on limiting access to European status' so 'the elevation of white women as civilization's guardians also confined them within narrow spheres. As reproducers of the ruling elite, they established through their daily actions the boundaries of their group identity; hence their behavior came under group scrutiny'. She then discusses 'the images and treatment of colonized women' which 'resulted from more complex projections. On the one hand, colonized women were not viewed as women at all in the European sense; they were spared neither harsh labor nor harsh punishment. On the other hand, as the reproducers of the labor force, colonized women were valued as one might value a prize broodmare. Equally, men of European descent eroticized colonized women as exotic, socially prohibited, but available and subjugated sexual objects...' (p.272.)

80 *De Christen*, 15 Sept. 1882, p.435.

Het geluk des mans ligt grootlijks in haar magt.... Onderworpenheid is voor den trotschen geest zeer moeilijk; ja zij is onmogelijk; en toch zonder onderworpenheid van de kant der vrouw, zal geluk nooit des mans deel zijn. Onderwerping is de plicht der vrouw...⁸¹

[Man's happiness is greatly in her power.... For the proud spirit, subjection is very difficult, yes, even impossible. And yet without subjection from the woman/wife, the husband will never be happy. Subjection is woman's/the wife's duty...]

Women were reminded that disobeying their husbands meant disobedience to Christ, and told to teach themselves humility, meekness and subservience:

De vrouw behoort niet te vergeten ... dat Hij hare ongehoorzaamheid beschouwt als tegen zijn gezag, en op hare onvriendelijkheid jegens haren man ziet als een bedroeven van zijne liefde. Mijne zuster, het is uw plicht om onderworpenheid, om des Heeren wil te leeren, om in te ademen en aan den dag te leggen een zachtmoedigen, nederigen, onderworpenen geest, een geest die alles om des gewetens wille zal toegeven, mits gij, dit doende, niet tegen God zondigt...⁸²

[A wife should never forget ... that God regards her disobedience as opposed to his authority, and sees unfriendliness against her husband as a rejection of his [God's] love. My sister, it is your duty to learn subjection for God's sake, to take into yourself a meek, humble, submissive spirit and live accordingly. A spirit that submits in every regard as long as you, while doing so, do not sin against God...]

It was within this construction of femininity that mothers were called on to convert their families. Writers again idealised and glorified the spiritual duties of the 'huismoeder' ['house-mother']:

O moeders! uwe roeping is heerlijk, kostelijker dan al de schatten der wereld. Gij oefent een invloed op uwe huisgenoten uit, die niemand ter wereld kan keeren...⁸³

[O mothers! Your calling is wonderful, more precious than all the treasures of the world. You exercise an influence over your family that no one in the world can prevent...]

But while women were told that the salvation of family members - including their husbands - was in their power, they were to exercise their influence privately and passively, through gentle female virtues: prayer, home-making, setting a good example, and careful words were the great weapons of womankind. In the stories, women prayed, sacrificed and died;

⁸¹ *De Kerkbode*, 8 June 1894, p.625. In Dutch (as well as Afrikaans), the same word is used for 'wife' and 'woman'.

⁸² *Ibid*. See also *Het Christelijk Huisgezin* by A. Dreyer, 'Zendeling der Ned. Ger. Kerk' ['Missionary of the DRC'], published by the author in 1898. Dreyer introduced his subject thus: 'What is the Family? It is a small kingdom. The father is its head, and he takes upon him authority that is bestowed in wisdom and executed with love...' (p.1, my translation).

⁸³ *De Christen*, 15 Sept. 1882, p.434.

their children remembered and were saved. Wives with drinking husbands provided comfort and friendliness at home, and their men gave up the pub.⁸⁴

To what extent did women themselves help to construct and promote such views? Although contributors to these religious journals often remained anonymous, the majority were probably men. After all, their work was published in journals run by *predikanten* with prominent positions in a male-dominated church. But from the 1880s, regular (and unattributed) columns by a female writer, and similarly anonymous advice to 'mothers' was very likely written by two women from those prominent missionary and theologian families, the Neethlings and Murrays.⁸⁵ Occasional writers using female pseudonyms supported the emphasis on domesticity. 'Eene moeder' affirmed her and her female audience's common identity in the circumscribed terms of the dominant gender discourse: 'Wij zijn vrouwens, moeders, huismoeders' ['We are women, mothers, house-mothers']. She combined intimate knowledge of mothers' work-load with the assurance that religious devotion gave meaning to domestic duties:

Na eenen rusteloozen nacht worden wij *voor* den dag wakker gemaakt door een lastig kindje, dat wij niet weer in slaap kunnen sussen, en daar is het werk van het dag aangevangen, en dikwijls, dikwijls gaan de uren voorbij, en wij kunnen niet eens een ogenblik vinden om letterlik naar onze binnen-kamer te gaan om te bidden. Meer dan één predikant ... voor wien toch eindelijk eene stille ure komt, zal dit in twijfel trekken. Weinige moeders zullen het doen. Vrouwenwerk komt nooit op een end. Hoe zalig dan te weten dat, als wij niet tijd hebben om naar onze binnenkamer te gaan, om onze Heiland te ontmoeten, Hij gewillig is om tot ons te komen in onze kinderkamer, in onze keuken, ... en overal waar wij werken en roept.... Wij kunnen, zoo wij willen, aan Zijne voeten zitten, met onze kinderen in onze armen, ons werk in onze handen...⁸⁶

84 *De Wekker*, 'De Visser en zijne bruid', Nov. 1880, p.58; 'Goede Raad voor een moedeloze vrouw', June 1891, p.3. *De Wekker* of June 1891 provided 'Good advice for despondent women': 'Always think of the virtues your husband still has; then you will be able to bear his vices more easily and seek his improvement through gentle admonition' (p.3). Von Wielich likewise explained that women shaped their children's character, but 'no less powerfully does she weave the character of her husband. This she does not only through quiet and careful execution of her domestic duties and virtues, but also by her simple, pious ways, so that with and without words, her husband is won for God's service.' (My translation, *De Christen*, 15 Sept. 1882, p.435.)

85 Maria Neethling, daughter of Andrew Murray and married to J.H. Neethling who edited *De Wekker*, contributed to the journal, as did her daughter Elizabeth Neethling. P.J. Pienaar's biography of the latter, *Ella Neethling Deur haar Suster* (Noorder Paarl: Paarl drukpers, 1927) records that this Bloemhof Seminary graduate and leading member of the Women's Missionary Society regularly wrote for *De Wekker* and ran the journal after her father died in 1904. Maria published *Aangename Sondae* (Pleasant Sundays), a collection of stories for mothers to read to their children in 1898. Elizabeth also published *Wat dit Beteken om 'n Moeder te Wees* (What it Means to be a Mother) - the Afrikaans edition first came out in 1916.

[After a restless night we are woken before daybreak by a difficult child that we can not lull to sleep, and already the day's work has begun, and often, often, hours go by and we cannot find even one moment to go to our room and pray. More than one minister ... for whom after all a quiet hour arrives, would doubt this. Few mothers would. Woman's work is never done. How blessed then the knowledge that when we have no time to go to our room to meet our Lord, He is willing to come to us in the nursery, the kitchen.... We could, if we wanted to, sit at His feet, with our children in our arms, our work in our hands...]

By the 1890s, *De Wekker* also regularly and prominently featured a 'brief aan de Zusters' ['letter to the Sisters']. The column had two writers, and replaced letters previously circulated amongst *predikantsvrouwen* (ministers' wives). In line with the dominant trend, writers emphasised women's maternal role as religious instructors of children.⁸⁷ And yet, women's religious discourse did not simply echo that of male ministers. Although female contributors never challenged their exclusion from formal DRC structures, they signalled interest in an active religious role. Thus 'Lydia' and 'Eunice''s choice of pseudonyms indicated their identification with female office-bearers of the early Christian church.⁸⁸ The column was also concerned with the practical issues of mission support work. Occasional readers' letters reflected the growth of a network of women in the church and of an 'imagined community' centred around mission work.⁸⁹ As 'Susanna' wrote,

daar uwe brieven mij al veel ten zegen zijn geweest, zoo kan ik niet langer swijgen.... *De Wekker* is mij den laatsten tijd al dierbaarder geworden, vooral daar zij veel melding maakt van de zeer belangrijke Zendingzaak ... O Zuster, wij kennen elkander niet. Maar laten wij in den Geest samenwerken voor onzer Koning!⁹⁰

[your letters have been such a blessing to me that I can no longer remain silent.... In the last while *De Wekker* has become ever more dear to me, especially as it [lit. she] frequently deals with the so very important missionary effort. O Sister, we know each other not. But let us work together in the spirit for our King!]

86 *De Wekker*, Oct. 1883, p.197, original emphasis. See also 'Afgezonderd' in *De Kerkbode*, 31 Aug. 1888, pp.227-28, although this celebration of women's domestic duties was published without the writer's name, and likewise 'Deborahs boodskap' in *De Wekker*, March 1895, p.1.

87 *De Wekker*, July 1894, p.2; June 1895, p.2.

88 'Lydia' was Maria Neethling. She used the same pseudonym in her book *Vergaderde Leliën: verhalen voor eenige kinderen in Zuid Afrika die vroeg vergaderd zijn* (Nijmegen: PJ Milborn, nd c. 1900) 'Eunice' may well have been her daughter Elizabeth. A letter to *De Zuid-Afrikaan* (3 March 1908) mentions 'Lydia' as a brave member of the early Christian church 'die alleen de moed had om gemeenten tezamen te roepen in't open veld en godsdienst te houden' ['who alone had the courage to call the congregation together to hold a religious service in the open air'].

89 For an explanation of Benedict Anderson's use of this term, see Chapter Two, footnote 36.

90 *De Wekker*, Oct. 1896, pp.2-3.

Two publications run specifically by women offer interesting contrasts and similarities. The *Huguenot Seminary Annual*, published from 1895, reflected an insistence that women were entitled to an academic education, and the conviction that women could themselves become missionaries. Dana Robert has also argued that 'the example of the single missionary woman in providing an alternative role model to motherhood for Afrikaner women should not be underestimated.'⁹¹ Certainly, the letters from young women posted to remote mission stations in Southern Africa that appeared in the *Vrouwen Zending Bond*'s monthly *De Zendingbode* (published from 1887) provided accounts of activities that sometimes contrasted sharply with the narrow strictures of colonial domesticity.⁹² And yet, the American-inspired institutions never challenged the 'domestic ideology' of the dominant colonial culture. Girls were taught domestic duties alongside academic skills. Although women were encouraged to work as missionaries and teachers, their maternal role was never fundamentally challenged.

Kruger's survey of travel literature suggested an absence of specific gender discourses in the nineteenth century. But perusal of religious journals clearly show that from the 1870s, women and gender roles were points of discussion within the DRC - arguably the most important social institution in Dutch-Afrikaans communities of the Cape. Moreover, the new

91 Robert, 'Mount Holyoke Women and the Dutch Reformed Mission Movement', p.118.

92 The most important feature of *De Zendingbode* was regular letters from male and female missionaries. One may imagine that like their counterparts in England (see Catherine Hall, 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains ... to Africa's Golden Sand': Ethnicity, Race and Nation in Mid-Nineteenth century England, *Gender and History* 5 (2) 1993), the women's missionary societies in the Cape read these accounts at their meetings. The women missionaries typically described prayer meetings, Sunday school activities, teaching and the study of indigenous languages, and house-visits amongst strange tribes. Sometimes the letters home took on the character of high adventure. Thus Huguenot graduate Mathilde Goy, recently widowed because of 'the rinderpest and Matabele war', told how she decided to return from the eastern Orange Free State across the Zambezi to Papalye in order to bring provisions to the remaining missionaries. She took her small daughter and fifteen converts who had accompanied her to the Orange Free State. Having to abandon her wagon and oxen because of the rinderpest did not deter her, nor did the fact that her black 'boys' said they couldn't carry her. 'I felt how courage made me its master, and decided to continue. Yes, I walked 200 miles. We journeyed day and night through the terrible desert, sometimes through unknown, uninhabited bush, sometimes through burning sun and rain, through water and mud. We suffered hunger and thirst. But our Heavenly Father did not forsake us. Every evening I called my fifteen boys together, and we sang and prayed, and I felt that God heard our prayers. When we were in great trouble they came to me and said: "we trust that the Lord will not forsake you, mother"'. Eventually a message was sent to a friendly chief who dispatched a wagon to fetch them. Goy ended by saying that she hoped to return to missionary work. 'I felt like a wounded soldier that had to return [to the Orange Free State], but yet with a burning desire to devote myself to this work. I have been a missionary, and I want to be one again...' (*De Zendingbode*, July 1897, pp.767-69, my translation.)

discourse had emerged in response to changing gender roles in Dutch-Afrikaans society. Women were more active and visible as church and mission workers; moreover, appreciable numbers of young women had graduated from the new girls' high schools. In the 1890s, the first Dutch-Afrikaans women were even entering university. M.E. Rothmann, later prominent in the ACVV, was the fourth woman to enter a South African university (the South African College in Cape Town) in 1893. Her recollection of preparing to leave her home town is worth quoting in full, as she provides a rare glimpse of contemporary reactions to the changing gender roles heralded by women's education. News of 'new women' and 'feminism' had reached even tiny Swellendam, and some Dutch-Afrikaans women saw in education an avenue to female economic independence:

Op die dorp het dit heelwat opspraak verwek: Diegene wat reeds in boeke en tydskrifte gelees het van sulke verskynsels soos vroue op universiteit en wat deur die *Illustrated London News* e.d.m. op hoogte gebly het van die nuwe beroerings van die Feministe, was danig daarmee. Maar daar was ook kopskudders.

Ek het eendag saam met Ma na 'n winkel gegaan om te kyk na linne vir my 'uitrusting'... Die winkelbaas was mnr. George Ravenscroft. Hy was 'n goeie mens en 'n vriendelike buurman; maar iets soos 'n 'geleerde' meisie was vir hom darem teen die natuur.

'Ja', sê hy, onderwyl hy die stuk linne op die toonbank oopslaan.

'Ta' Annie laat seker jou kinders leer sodat hulle mans kan kry'.

Ma kyk hom met waardigheid aan. Jy sou aan haar houding gesê het dat die Suid-Afrikaanse Kollege al 'n lang reeks meisies aan haar te danke had.

'Ek laat hulle leer', antwoord sy, 'om sonder mans klaar te kom as hulle wil'.

Dit was vir daardie dae nogal stoute skoene aantrek, en my ma was (in teorie) 'n hater van 'mannetjiesvroue'; maar die aantying het in haar die feminis wakker gemaak. In elke vrou - dit is my ondervinding - skuil dit, maar in sommige, by wie die slaapgoed té verdowend is, word dit nooit wakker nie.⁹³

[In town the news was much talked about. Those already familiar from books and magazines with the phenomenon of women attending university, and who followed the new stirrings of the Feminists through the *Illustrated London News* etc., were pleased. But others shook their heads.

One day Ma and I went shopping for my new 'outfit'.... The shop owner was Mr George Ravenscroft. He was a good man and a friendly neighbour, but according to him the idea of an 'educated girl' was against nature.

'Yes', he said, while he unfolded the linen on the counter.

'I suppose Aunt Annie is giving your children an education so they will get husbands.'

Ma looked at him with dignity. You would have said that the South African College already owed a long series of girls to her.

'I let them study', she answered, 'so that they can do without men if they wish to.'

In those days this was rather daring, and (theoretically) my mother hated the 'men-women', but his allegation awakened the feminist in her. In every woman - this is my experience - she hides, only some are too drugged to awaken.]

It is hardly coincidental that precisely at this time, a discourse of idealised, Christian motherhood emerged. Tracts about wifely obedience suggest that churchmen perceived women's newfound confidence with a certain unease - perhaps also that the subservient and

93 M.E. Rothmann, *My Beskeie Deel: 'n Outobiografiese Vertelling* (Johannesburg: Tafelberg, 1972), p.73.

circumscribed role outlined for women did not always correspond to female attitude or actions.⁹⁴ But of course, 'ideas of women's place were underpinned by legal, political and social practices which subordinated women.'⁹⁵ And if women's moral power was to some extent recognised and celebrated, this was still coupled with political silence.

3. The Absence of Women in Nascent Afrikaner Nationalism, 1870 - 1898

If Dutch Reformed evangelicalism was an important force in educated Dutch-Afrikaans women's lives, other political stirrings were also beginning to reshape identity in their communities. Newly constructed ethnic discourses probably had a less direct impact on female gender identity than did religious trends. Unlike later manifestations of Afrikaner nationalism, the political projects of the late nineteenth century did not formally or visibly include women. The colony's enfranchised citizens were by definition male (and mostly white); active participation in the new ethnic politics was also gender-specific.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the educated women who now did mission and welfare work would soon play

94 By the early 1890s, women's active presence in the church were also influencing debates in the DRC synod. The question of 'vrije verkiesing' or whether members of DRC congregations should elect their church council was vigorously debated. Ministers and church council members also discussed whether women should have the right to vote. Some expressed their opposition to this idea, but others disagreed. One minister who believed that women should have 'stemrecht' explained that two thirds of his congregation was female. 'Zij doen veel, werken veel, en waarom zouden zij dan niet kunnen stemmen' ['They do much, work hard, and why should they then not be able to vote']. But the election of females to the church council was never a topic for discussion (*De Kerkbode*, 26 Oct. 1894, p.789; 2 Nov. 1894, pp.797-99).

95 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class*, p.25.

96 Accounts of the male and female political cultures in the United States of the nineteenth century offer interesting comparative material. See, for example, K.K. Sklar's 'The Historical Foundations of Women's Power in the Creation of the American Welfare State, 1830-1930' in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (eds), *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Sklar explores the 'race-specific' story of white women's reform activism. To a large extent, the comparison is interesting for the evident differences between the situation and activities of white American and Dutch-Afrikaans contemporaries of the late nineteenth century. Sklar examines the development of a distinct 'women's political culture' alongside men's political culture that emerged after 'the early introduction of universal white-male suffrage', and seeks to explain 'the power that middle-class women exercised in the white polity between 1890 and 1920 as they channelled the resources of the state in new directions...' (pp.43-93).

a more visibly public role, and were exposed to new ways of political identification in the rapidly changing political economy of the 1880s and 1890s.

Afrikaner nationalist historians, whilst claiming the prior existence of a distinct Afrikaner identity, trace the roots of pan-Afrikaner nationalism to the late 1870s and early 1890s. Others have questioned the existence of a coherent and organic Afrikaner nationalism intent on self-determination during the nineteenth century. Giliomee and Tamarkin's exploration of the shifting meaning of 'Afrikaner' highlight important aspects of this argument. The word first referred to 'slaves or ex-slaves of African descent as well as whites'. From the eighteenth century and more frequently during the nineteenth century, white settlers of French, German and Dutch extraction began to call themselves 'Afrikanen'. This reflected a process of cultural homogenisation and the 'emergence of a collective consciousness among the Cape settlers'.⁹⁷ But the word 'generally had a colonial (or regional) rather than an ethnic connotation.'⁹⁸

From the 1830s the *De Zuid-Afrikaan* - a bilingual paper representing the western Cape's more well-to-do farmers - described both Dutch and English speakers as Afrikaners. The eastern Cape's *De Afrikaner*, founded in the 1880s, reflected a similar political vision that saw one identity replacing the discrete Dutch and English identities of the settlers.⁹⁹ In the 1890s, whites in the colony still referred to 'Dutch Afrikaners' and 'English Afrikaners' - while Jingoist English speakers used the word in a pejorative racist sense.¹⁰⁰ As Tamarkin has argued, the British occupation of the Cape 'introduced ... an overlapping, mutually reinforcing ethno-cultural dichotomy between foreign rulers and 'indigenous' subjects, between a dominant English community and a subordinate Afrikaner one'.¹⁰¹

97 M. Tamarkin, 'Nationalism or "Tribalism": the Evolution of Cape Afrikaner Ethnic Consciousness in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Nations and Nationalism* 1, 2 (1995), p.80. As Tamarkin explains, 'Cape Afrikaners' were 'a mongrel ethnic variety' in which the Dutch element was a minority, and with substantial German and French infusions.

98 Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism', p.120.

99 The founding date of this newspaper is unknown. The South African Library has copies dating from 1884. From 1899, it was succeeded by *De Middellandsche Afrikaander*.

100 *Ibid.*, pp.120-27. For a discussion of problems regarding the definition of 'Afrikaner' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see also André du Toit and Hermann Giliomee, *Afrikaner Political Thought, Vol. 1, 1780 - 1850* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1983), pp.XXV - XXVII.

101 Tamarkin, 'Nationalism or "Tribalism"', p.80.

British imperialism also served as an agent of aggressive capitalism, and introduced to the Cape the economic, administrative and educational 'revolutions' which were at the root of European ethnic revivals and nationalisms.¹⁰² But their impact was slow and uneven. By the 1870s, no coherent and unifying self-identification as 'Afrikaners' was apparent.¹⁰³ However, the first Afrikaner political organisations mobilising on the basis of shared ethnic ties emerged at the end of the decade. Groups of 'Dutch Afrikaners' already shared a common cultural descent. Now affiliations of language, culture, religion and race provided a base for mobilisation towards a collective political identity. The context for the beginnings of Afrikaner ethnic mobilisation was rapid economic change after the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley (1867) and gold on the Rand (1886). As Gellner has argued, nationalist discourses of the nineteenth century were typically constructed in response to major social change. Industrialisation and capitalist transformation led to breakdown of previously stable institutions and 'traditions', so that existing discourses were no longer 'applicable in or adaptable to the changing situation'.¹⁰⁴ In a brief period of thirty years, mining on the Rand brought a new form of industrial capitalism to a hitherto slow-moving agrarian economy and 'wrought far-reaching political, social and ideological transformations'.¹⁰⁵

Giliomee has decisively linked a heightened sense of ethnicity amongst 'Cape Afrikaners' and the dissolution of political apathy to economic and political factors. Revenues from diamond mining crucially changed the dynamics of parliamentary politics and drew hitherto disinterested Dutch-Afrikaans speakers into the system. With the introduction of responsible government in 1872, parliament controlled the rapidly growing revenue produced by diamond mining, and 'the struggle for control of the state's resources ... became a serious

102 *Ibid.*, p.81.

103 Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism', p.127. However, Giliomee does argue that 'by the 1860s outside observers remarked on the existence of an ethnic group transcending political boundaries...' (p.126.)

104 E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p.6.

105 S. Marks and S. Trapido, 'The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism' in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987), p.4. See also C. van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886 - 1914, Volume 1: New Babylon* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982), p.2.

matter...'¹⁰⁶ Cape Afrikaners now began to 'mobilise ethnically and struggle for influence in the political institutions of the colonial state'.¹⁰⁷

While Giliomee and Tamarkin take the exclusively male nature of the *Boere Bescherminings Vereniging* and the *Afrikaner Bond* as self-evident, they do explore the racial and class lines of ethnic mobilisation. Founded in the late 1870s, the two organisations merged in 1883, with Hofmeyr as leader. The new *Afrikaner Bond* 'soon became the strongest bloc in the Cape Parliament'.¹⁰⁸ But neither the BBV nor the *Bond* constituted a nationalist movement that bridged gaps between well-off white farmers and businessmen, and poorer white farmers and *bywoners* (sharecroppers). While feelings of relative deprivation generated by uneven capitalist development prompted mobilisation amongst farmers, class-cleavages in Dutch-Afrikaans society were not bridged.¹⁰⁹ Instead, larger farmers promoted their own interests, and limited alliances between sections of the petty-bourgeoisie and marginalised farmers were temporarily formed.¹¹⁰

Moreover, developments on the Rand hit Boer communities in the Orange Free State and Transvaal harder than their Cape Dutch brethren. Existing schisms between large landholders, small farmers and a growing class of *bywoners* were exacerbated as land prices rose and land ownership was concentrated in fewer hands.¹¹¹ In the Cape of the nineteenth

106 Marks and Trapido, 'The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism', p.4.; Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism', p.129.

107 Tamarkin, 'Nationalism or "Tribalism"', p.82.

108 Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism', pp.121-22.

109 *Ibid.*, p.131.

110 The immediate context for the formation of the BBV was a period of economic adversity for western Cape farmers. Launched to protest against a proposed tax on brandy, the BBV drew together wine farmers already hit by a slump after protective tariffs were abolished in 1861.

While Hofmeyr led the large landholders and more commercialised farmers and businessmen in the BBV, S.J. du Toit's populist *Afrikaner Bond* attracted middling and small farmers. When Hofmeyr took over the *Bond* in 1883, it represented the former, richer section of the Dutch-Afrikaans population. Until the Jameson Raid, the *Bond* also counted Rhodes - who supported farmer interests - an Afrikaner (Giliomee, *The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism*, p.123). See also Tamarkin, 'Nationalism or "Tribalism"', who points out that many members of the Afrikaner intelligentsia were fully anglicised and not drawn to ethnic politics.

111 Isabel Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity, 1902-1924', in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987) p.99.

century, industrialisation occurred less traumatically. Cape farmers had already experienced economic slumps from the 1860s. But farmers already hit by the abolition of preferential tariffs were further affected by massive movement of capital from the Cape to the northern interior in the latter 1880s which fostered 'a spatial shift in the core of the regional economy'.¹¹² The new orientation to investment in the interior, supported by powerful economic interests, meant that productive development in the Cape Colony was neglected.¹¹³ Economic rivalry between the Colony and interior republics also helped prevent the development of 'Afrikaner ethnic consciousness ... as a political force transcending parochial territorial boundaries'.¹¹⁴

As Tamarkin also shows, armed conflict between the British annexation of Transvaal and the Anglo-Boer war of 1880-81 elicited expressions of solidarity from Dutch-Afrikaans speakers in the Cape. However, 'the Transvaal crisis, rather than providing a boost to pan-Afrikaner nationalism, was a collective catharsis which greatly enhanced their attachment to the British empire'.¹¹⁵ Ethno-republican elements in the *Bond* were increasingly marginalised during the 1880s, and its loyalty to the British crown consolidated. While the Jameson Raid of 1895 'sharpened Cape Afrikaners' ethnic identity and consciousness', the *Bond* was not diverted from the main thrust of its political and ideological path, 'loyalty to Britain and the desire towards the foundation of a non-ethnic white nation'.¹¹⁶

In histories of the *volk*, the formation in Paarl in 1875 of *Die Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* and its paper, *Di Patriot* also take pride of place. But the efforts of this 'Fellowship of True Afrikaners' to promote a written form of Afrikaans have also been contextualised by Jean du Plessis and Giliomee. Du Plessis explores different local responses to 'modernisation' as some of the western Cape clergymen, teachers and farmers promoted the aims of the GRA and others opposed it. Giliomee shows that the organisation's founding members were drawn from a new class of Dutch-Afrikaans churchmen and teachers,

112 Alan Mabin, 'The Course of Economic Development in the Cape Colony, 1854-99. A Case of Truncated Transition' (paper presented to the Third Biennial Conference of the Economic History Society of Southern Africa, Durban, 1984), p.8.

113 *Ibid.*, p.9.

114 Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism', p.125. See also Tamarkin, 'Nationalism or "Tribalism"', p.90.

115 Tamarkin, 'Nationalism or "Tribalism"', p.86.

116 *Ibid.*, pp.91-92. See also T.R. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1966)

increasingly marginalised in a colonial culture dominated by English.¹¹⁷ In the changing economy of the 1870s, the dominance of English frustrated the careers of a new class of educated, mostly male Dutch-Afrikaans speakers. Teachers saw the colonial government neglecting rural Afrikaans schools in favour of urban English establishments. Ministers heard talk of DRC stipends being removed.

Another threat for Dutch-trained teachers and ministers of religion was the growing popularity of English amongst Dutch Afrikaners. In 1874, a memorandum against the introduction of responsible government from members of the Cape Executive Council still claimed that 'the Dutch-speaking majority of the population for the most part entertain strong prejudices against English habits and institutions'.¹¹⁸ Wealthy Dutch families certainly 'manipulated a variety of linguistic registers. These stretched from what passed for High Dutch, through more informal discourse to a language for servants, workers and farm labourers'.¹¹⁹ Even so, from the 1870s increasing numbers of the more well-to-do Dutch Afrikaners were sending their children to English schools, eager that they should master the language of commerce and culture. In the new girls' high schools, including those sponsored by the DRC, the medium of instruction was also English. English was increasingly used in letters and even diaries, and language purists complained about the corruption of spoken Dutch by English words and phrases. *Ons Tijdschrift* included 'dames' ['ladies'] amongst the many culprits that contributed to the decline of 'de Afrikaansche natie' ['Afrikaans nation']. The former Elizabeth van der Bijl and Maria Hugo were now 'Lizzie Wenderbaail' and 'Mary Hieuwgo'. 'Toekomstige moeders' ['Future mothers'] were crucial for the survival of the mother tongue but said things like 'Hê-jy jou anders *ge-enjoy* op die *promenade concert* van gistraant?' and 'Nu ja, *goodbye dear, I must be off*'.¹²⁰

117 Jean du Plessis, 'Colonial progress and countryside conservatism: an essay on the legacy of Van der Lingen of Paarl, 1831-1875' (M.A. dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1988); H. Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism', p.116. Before the 1870s, English was already the language of commerce and education. But in a largely pre-industrial South Africa, Dutch-Afrikaans farmers had little reason to 'regard language in anything but instrumental terms...'. Economic survival did not demand communication in a standardised language, and 'the relative neglect of Dutch in the commercial and small industrial sector was not a serious political issue'. For a lively description of rural Dutch-Afrikaans and small-town English culture in the 1860s and 1870s, see Schoeman, *Olive Schreiner: a Woman in South Africa*, pp.134 and 328-29. Schoeman questions the tendency by latter-day, urbanised Afrikaners to reject descriptions of nineteenth century Dutch-Afrikaans speakers as crude and uneducated. He also points to the contradictions in English immigrant communities where a male-dominated culture was 'centred round the billiard room and bar', while underutilised libraries and concert halls functioned as symbols of superiority.

118 Schoeman, *Olive Schreiner*, p.324.

119 Hofmeyr, 'Building a Language from Words', p.96.

The *Genootskap* sought to align itself with small farmers and tradespeople, and sold *Di Patriot* to the 'genteel poor' - struggling teachers, shopkeepers and clerics. But the *Afrikaner Bond* rejected the 'kombuistaal' ['kitchen language'] of the Paarl grouping. Instead, Hofmeyr supported *Het Afrikaansche Familieblad*, a Dutch 'family magazine' promoting a less populist version of Afrikaner culture and history.

A coherent body of Afrikaner nationalist lore had yet to be constructed, and late nineteenth century cultural nationalism included convoluted and contradictory responses to imperial rule.¹²¹ The combined efforts of these publications helped to popularise versions of 'Afrikaner' history and culture. Du Toit's populist movement had lost its drive by 1890, and survived as a somewhat esoteric interest of a few enthusiasts.¹²² As tensions rose and Dutch/English alliances in the Cape soured in the years immediately before the war, English became more frequently associated with empire-rule and resented as culturally dominant.

Historians who explore the class and race dynamics of cultural projects in the late nineteenth century have mostly failed to note the apparent absence of active female participants. The popular culture promoted in *Di Patriot* and *Ons Tijdschrift* occasionally featured women. They appeared as faithful wives, pretty *nooientjies* (marriageable girls) or bereaved widows. In popular histories and dramas, they occasionally featured as ardent supporters of the *volk*.

Women themselves did not visibly contribute to these publications. However, they were occasional contributors to another debate that increasingly occupied Dutch-Afrikaans middle-class society in the 1890s. An ethnicised discourse identifying an *arme blanken*

120 Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism', p.124; Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words', p.96; *Ons Tijdschrift* (Cape Town: J Dusseau, 1896). The writer argued that Dutch speakers who anglicised their names and adopted an English vocabulary implicitly accepted the dominance and superiority of English culture. He also referred to the wider colonial context of racial dominance. Dutch speakers (so he pointed out) would never call their children after 'Kaffer' leaders like 'Hintza', 'Kreli' or 'Cetewayo', for inferiors always adopt the names and language of their superiors (pp.23-5).

121 For example, J.D. Kestell's *The Struggle for Freedom, or the Rebellion of Slagters Nek: a Tragedy in five Acts* (London: Wyman, 1881.) The story of Slagtersnek in the style of a Shakespearean tragedy did not appeal to London audiences, and the writer reportedly buried rejected copies in his back garden. S.J. Du Toit combined expressions of nationalism and patriotism with admiration for Rhodes and the British Empire. Literary efforts in *Di Patriot* included a version of the Queen of Sheba myth featuring Boer heroes searching for treasure in darkest Africa.

122 Giliomee, 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism', p.122.

probleem (poor white problem) would soon inform women's organisational work in important ways, and the social context for its development is therefore important.

Middle-class Dutch-Afrikaans speakers were newly cognisant of an established social trend: landless and unskilled men and women had been 'a distinctive feature of the Cape well before 1890'.¹²³ In 'Vagabond Hollanders and Runaway Englishmen', Bundy argues that the expansion of capitalist agriculture and the spread of railway and other construction work promoted considerable differentiation before the discovery of gold and rapid urbanisation.¹²⁴ During the periods of recession between 1860 and 1890 rural poverty increased significantly. Many landholders and tenants lost access to land and were forced to seek work as farm labourers, in road-making and the transport industry.

While a significant minority of capitalising farmers in eastern Cape districts turned changing market conditions to their advantage, 'each instance of agrarian improvement and capitalisation had a direct impact on their less enterprising, less credit-worthy and less well-off neighbours.' Greater productivity upon capitalised land increased local competition for labour, while rising land values made it more difficult for those lower down the economic ladder to buy or rent farms.¹²⁵ Consequently 'the accumulation by some contributed directly to the proletarianization of others'.¹²⁶

Carnegie commission case studies from the Cape regions support this view.¹²⁷ Studies from the Cape regions confirm the presence in the nineteenth century of numbers of *bywoners*: 'Altyd armoed: vader arm, vrou arm, vrou se ouers arm ...' ['Always poverty: father poor, wife poor, wife's parents poor ...']¹²⁸ Thus the interviewer commented on Sarel Alers, born

123 C. Bundy, 'Vagabond Hollanders and Runaway Englishmen: White Poverty in the Cape before Poor Whiteism' in W. Beinart and P. Delius (eds), *Putting a Plough to the Ground* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), p.102.

124 *Ibid.*, p.103.

125 *Ibid.*, pp.106-8.

126 *Ibid.*, p.108.

127 The published results of the Carnegie Commission appeared in 1932. M.E. Rothmann collected material for the Commission in the Cape countryside during 1929. The original case-studies on which she based her findings are housed in the M.E. Rothmann collection at the University of Stellenbosch Document Centre (hereafter USDC, MER).

128 USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (5), Prins Albert 25, p.94. This data is drawn from the original fieldwork done by Rothmann. The final, published Carnegie report drew different conclusions.

in 1847. Like his father he was a *bywoner* and except for a brief interlude when he tried his hand at mining ('by Gatsplaas gaan goud grawe' ['went digging for gold at Gats-farm']) he stayed on various farms in the Prince Albert district. The father of Petrus du Toit, about the same age as Sarel, was also 'veeboer op andermans grond.' Petrus received some livestock from his father and lived as a *bywoner* first on his grandmother's and then his cousin's farm. Sarie van der Westhuizen, born in the Prince Albert district in 1855, recalled the hard 'manswerk' ['men's work'] she did on farms and her domestic labour 'in service' to families. Her father lost his land and livestock after a drought in the mid-1860s; he then worked as a *bywoner*.¹²⁹

However, the studies also suggest a significant increase of landless whites in the latter half of the century - in Bundy's definition, *bywoners* who were either 'formally propertyless' and lived on the farms of others under a range of tenancy agreements, or 'effectively propertyless' colonists who held on to 'tiny unworkable fragments of oft-divided farms'.¹³⁰

Dutch-Afrikaans women already worked towards establishing institutions for destitute whites in the 1880s. The *Kinderzendinghuis*, an orphanage founded in 1882, was the initiative of two Dutch-Afrikaans women. Their work amongst 'coloureds' near the Cape Town docks apparently led them to 'make contact with' white children who lived with 'coloured and Muslim' families. They henceforth diverted their energies to the founding of a new orphanage for white children. Women also helped fund and administrate the Dorcas *armenhuis* for 'Protestant' (effectively white) destitute women in 1883.¹³¹

It was from the 1890s that DRC ministers first defined 'Arme Blanken' ['Poor Whites'] as a problem to be addressed. Correspondence in the Dutch press highlighted the problem of poverty and unemployment amongst whites, and petitioned parliament for funds to educate

129 Rothmann's notes describe the hard life of this semi-literate bywoner from a family of eleven. As a girl she worked for her family and later to support herself and her sister. 'She did men's work on the farm, the whole day in the veld with cattle, irrigated land, weeded, did spade-work, sowed corn, in service with people ... worked hard. Her sister was always with her, she had the "black fever" and was later retarded ... took washing in as well' (my translation). Rothmann's research shows that in the late nineteenth century, girls from landless families often did heavy farm work. See also my discussion of women's work in Chapter Three.

130 Bundy, 'Vagabond Hollanders and Runaway Englishmen', p.105.

131 P.F. Greyling, *Die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk en Armesorg* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1939), pp.160, 314 (my translation). Although he writes that the *Vrouwenfonds* (Women's fund) made land available for the Dorcas house, he calls DRC minister A.D. Luckhoff its 'father and founder'.

rural children. In her column in *De Wekker*, 'Lydia' also pointed to the danger of focussing on mission work whilst neglecting one's own poor:

Er wordt veel gesproken over de uitbreiding van het zendingwerk door onze kerk verricht. Ik stel groot belang in dat werk, maar zullen wij het eene doen en het andere nalaten? Onze armen hier hebben wel vele voorrechten, die de heidenen niet hebben, en toch worden de kinderen van die armen meer en meer een groot heidendom in ons midden De zusters in het bovenland (zooals wij de plaatsen nabij de Kaap noemen) kunnen nauwelijks begrijpen, hoe het hier in het onderveld met onze armen gesteld is, want daar kunnen bijna alle armen nog iets te doen krijgen, maar hier is het anders gesteld met de heel armen, en in vele gevallen zijn zij reeds lager gezonken dan de kleurlingen.¹³²

[There is much talk about the expansion of the mission work of our church. I have great interest in that work, but should we do one and neglect the other? Our poor here do have many advantages that the heathen don't have, and yet the children of the poor are more and more becoming a huge heathendom in our midst.... The sisters in the *bovenland* (as we call the places near Cape Town) can scarcely realise what it is like here for our poor in the lowveld, because there almost all poor can still find something to do, but here it is very different for the very poor, and in many cases they have already sunk lower than the coloureds.]

Andrew Murray also wrote about the need for industrial schools - for girls as well as for boys. Boys with no future in farming would be taught useful trades, girls taught washing, ironing and general domestic work. 'Is er geene predikants-vrouw die gevoelt dat zij als moeder van een 30 of 40 arme meisjes eene nieuwe vreugde in het leven zou hebben?' ['Is there no minister's wife who feels that as mother of 30 or 40 poor girls she will find a new joy in life?'] asked Murray.¹³³

While little came of plans for a girls' school, an industrial school for boys was soon established. Although ostensibly organised by DRC ministers, most work was probably done by women of the church. At the formal opening the presence of a dozen or so highly placed churchmen and parliamentarians was outweighed by fifty-odd women.

By 1896, *De Wekker's zusterlijke brieven* also reflected a concern with poor white girls. 'Lydia' explained that the 'algemene ontwaking' over the need to educate poor children had generated valuable work, but 'deze inrichtingen [zijn] voor jongens, en er is nog niets gedaan voor de meisjes...' ['these institutions are for boys, and nothing has yet been done for the girls...']¹³⁴

¹³² *De Wekker*, Jan. 1896, pp.1-2.

¹³³ *De Kerkbode*, 16 July 1893, pp.187-88.

¹³⁴ *De Wekker*, Jan. 1896, pp.1-2.

Was this new concern with white impoverishment linked to the first stirrings of Afrikaner nationalism? Some middle-class Afrikaners were certainly concerned about the ethnic categories that would inform the new school. A query from the *Afrikaner Bond* 'waar en hoe ... de lijn tusschen blank en gekleurd' ['where and how ... the line between white and coloured'] would be drawn, which nationality nurtured and which language taught drew a reassuring response. The school was for children of impoverished 'blanke ouders' ['white parents'] from rural districts. Dutch would be taught 'in nationalen geest' ['in national spirit'] and the venture was undertaken 'uit liefde voor ons volk' ['out of love for our people']. However, the DRC ministers spear-heading the venture complained that most funds had been contributed by English friends. It was only after the South African War that the fate of *arm blanken* would become a concern widely shared amongst Afrikaner nationalist women and men.

It was also in the tense count-down to the war that Dutch-Afrikaans women in the Colony first made their political views known in public. The last weeks before hostilities were openly declared were punctuated by open letters, editorials and church services in which DRC leaders preached for peace (most maintained a careful neutrality). In September 1899, Dutch newspapers and religious journals also published a petition that was circulating in the Cape.¹³⁵ Dutch-Afrikaans women spoke 'als moeders en dochters' ['as mothers and daughters'] of their 'onuitsprekelijken' ['inexpressible'] fear of war:

Velen onzer zijn door geboorte of huwelijksbetrekking nauw verbonden aan de inwoners der Transvaal ... de verschrikkelikheden van een oorlog zoude menige woning ook in deze kolonie in ellende, duizende uwer getrouwe en verkleefde onderdanen in rouw dompelen; zouden een gevoel van vervreemding versterken tusschen de twee rassen die in vrede en eensgezindheid moesten wonen onder uwer majesteits weldadig bestuur en zouden voor altoos vernietigen dat droombeeld van een vereenigd volk...¹³⁶

[Many of us have strong bonds of birth and marriage with the inhabitants of the Transvaal ... the horrors of war would also bring grief to numerous homes in this colony and plunge many of your loyal subjects into mourning; would further alienate the two races who should live in peace and harmony under your majesty's benevolent government and would destroy that ideal of a unified people...]

De Zuid-Afrikaan assisted with the collection of petitions, but once war was declared, the matter did not merit further attention. Within a few months however, the Dutch press would develop an entirely different attitude towards women's views of war.

135 G. Rauch, 'Die Optrede en Verantwoording van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika' (M.A. dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1979), pp.18-21.

136 *De Kerkbode*, 21 Sept. 1899, p.596.

4. 'De Stem der Vrouw' ('The Voice of Woman') in the South African War: the Origins of the ACVV

Als deze oorlog door de aanstokers lang vergeten is, dan zal het hart van de vrouw hetzy moeder, zuster of weduwe nog bloeden. Zuid-Afrika ligt heden verscheurd, gewond en bloeiend aan de voeten van Engeland. O Afrika gy mog wel weenen, want ziet uw zonen worden u ontnemen, uw bloem heeft zyn kleuren nu verloren.¹³⁷

[When this war will have long been forgotten by the perpetrators, then the heart of woman, whether mother, sister or widow will still bleed. South Africa lies torn apart, wounded and bleeding at the feet of England. Oh Africa you may well weep, for see thy sons are taken from you, your flower has now lost its colours.]

Dutch-Afrikaans women made a dramatic entrance into public politics with a spate of anti-war protest meetings in 1900. At first, their proper role in communities sympathetic to the Boer republics was defined in terms entirely in accord with their usual role in small-town South Africa. In early 1900, while ever-lengthening lists of *Republikeinse krijgsgevangenes* (Republican prisoners of war) appeared in the Dutch press, the Dutch-Reformed Church (with Ds Roos, procurator of the DRC, as a leading figure) and the *Afrikaner Bond* launched funding drives for the prisoners. Cradock's *De Middellandsche Afrikaander* promptly suggested 'een heerlyk werk voor onze jonge dames. Zouden eenigen van hen niet tezamen willen komen, zich in een comité vormen en dan met lysten rondgaan en collecteeren voor dit doel?' ['A wonderful task for our young ladies. Could some of them not come together, form a committee and then take lists round to collect for this purpose?']¹³⁸ A local correspondent applied his poetic talent to the issue and neatly summed up the gender dynamics of fund-raising for the *volk*:

Dus moet ons nu dat dit gons geld vergare
Collecteere en probeere met basare
en die meisies (dierb're seisies) moet nu werke
Dat di kerels (kosb're perels) dit kan merke...
Kom werk saam nou in één naam nou: Afrikaander¹³⁹

[Therefore we must now collect money with energy/Try and collect with bazaars/and the girls (dear little things) must now work/So that the fellows, (expensive pearls), will take notice.../Come let's work together now in *one* name: Afrikaander.]

That the women hardly needed prompting to start baking was clear from a letter one Elizabeth Jordaan sent to the paper. Jordaan spoke approvingly of plans for a bazaar, but

137 Mrs Michau from Colesberg, as reported in *Het Oosten*, 18 Oct. 1900.

138 *De Middellandsche Afrikaander*, 9 March 1900.

139 *Ibid.*, 'Die Krygsgevangene en Wat ons moet doen' ['The prisoner of war and what we must do'], 13 March 1900. In Dutch newspapers of the time, writing poems about a variety of issues was almost as popular as writing letters in prose.

also urged that a 'Dames Comité' ['Ladies' Committee'] be formed to alleviate the plight of their northern brethren:

De mannen zullen veel doen, maar laten wy trachten afzonderlyk iets te doen.... Er is O, zoo veel noodig, nu dat het getal zoo zeer vermeerderd is.... Myn hart treurt als ik denk, dat die gevangenen waren gewoon te zingen: 'Dat vrye volk, Dat vrye volk, Dat vrye, vrye volk zyn wy', en nu moeten zy zitten als gevangenen - slecht gekleed en gevoed. Komt, zusters, laten wy de gevangenen gedenken als of wy medegevangenen zyn.¹⁴⁰

[The men will do a lot, but let us try to do something separately.... There is oh, so much to be done, now that the number has so drastically increased.... There is sorrow in my heart when I think, that those prisoners used to sing: 'that free people, that free people, that free, free, free people are we', and now they are held as prisoners, badly clad and fed. Come, sisters, let us think of them as if we were fellow-prisoners.]

In Cape Town, *dominees* Steytler, Roos and Marchand were leaders of the 'verzoeningsbeweging' ['conciliation movement'] that organised petitions against the war, and helped organise the first of the anti-war *Volkskongresse* (People's congresses) that took place at Graaff-Reinet on 31 May 1900. The only woman speaker was Olive Schreiner. Newspapers unused to any female presence at political gatherings also made special mention of women in the audience, among them the ministers' wives.¹⁴¹

But the women did not only organise *Krijgsgevangenebasaars* (Prisoner of war bazaars), and did not remain silent spectators for long. Nor were women of the pro-Boer party content to emulate the recently formed Guild of Loyal Women, much given to tea-parties in support of the British.¹⁴² Inspired by a demonstration in London of some 3000 women arranged by the South Africa Conciliation Committee, a number of Cape Town women organised a public meeting on July 9.¹⁴³ Delegates came from all over the western Cape, and prominent

140 *Ibid.*, 13 March 1900.

141 Schoeman, *Only Anguish to Live Here*, p.93.

142 *Ibid.*, pp.85-86.

143 Paula M. Kebs provides an account of British women's response to the concentration camps in 'The Last of the Gentlemen's Wars: Women in the Boer War Concentration Camp Controversy' (*History Workshop Journal* 33 (1992.)) She argues that '(t)he camps controversy took an issue about humanitarian conduct in war and framed it in terms of gender. Public debate centred on the questions of men's responsibilities toward women and women's role in war.' Kebs shows that late Victorian notions of race and class hierarchies were part of the discourse of female campaigners like Emily Hobhouse so that the controversy did not powerfully challenge 'the imperial idea' in Britain. Hobhouse's casting the camps as a 'woman's issue' influenced public discourse to shift from 'an argument for their military necessity - an argument in which women had no voice - to a new form in which women had the central place, the main voice. The men in charge of public

women included Anna Steytler and Johanna Malan (married to F.S. Malan, editor of the *De Zuid-Afrikaan*). While the most illustrious English speaker was Olive Schreiner, others were Betty Molteno and Alice Green, two teachers active in the anti-war camp, and Agnes Merriman, wife of J.X. Merriman.¹⁴⁴ As Karel Schoeman notes in his book on Olive Schreiner during the war, the next four months saw

no fewer than fourteen protest meetings ... in the Cape Colony ... which gives one indication of the strength of feeling existing among the pro-Boer party. What is especially remarkable about this, however, is the fact that women were soon taking the lead in the protest movement.¹⁴⁵

Between June and November female delegates travelled to *vrouwen vergaderinge* (women's meetings) in towns such as Paarl, Wellington, Ceres, Cradock, Tarkastad and Somerset East.

In less extraordinary times, Dutch newspapers only featured women's voices in the sale of patent medicines. ('De Moed van Haar Overtuiging. Mevr. Douallier spreekt met geen onzeker stem ... oor Dr. William's Pink Pills for Pale People ... van ingewandpynen, zwakheid, zenuweachtigheid en drukheid...') ['The Courage of Her Conviction. Mrs Douallier speaks with no uncertain voice ... of Dr. William's Pink Pills for Pale People ... of abdominal pains, weakness, anxiety and depression...']¹⁴⁶ Now, however, chronicles of liberation from female bodily woes were overshadowed by exhaustive reports of anti-war speeches made at the successive *vrouwen vergaderings* (women's meetings). They would continue to do so until the closure of newspapers in December severely curbed the expression of pro-Boer sentiment.

The speeches were unequivocally political. At all the protest meetings, women demanded that the independence of the republics be 'returned', that the war cease forthwith and that martial law be lifted. They spoke out against the 'onmenschelykheid' ['inhumanity'] of British war tactics that destroyed homes and targeted women and children, and pledged support for 'onzer Republikeinse zusters' ['our Republican sisters']. Many speakers launched into a chronicle of the *voortrekkers*' woes, casting 'onzer Afrikaner boeren' ['our Afrikaner boers'] as people in search of freedom, long pursued by avaricious British imperialists. A shared popular history mentioned land bought dearly with the blood of

representations of the war ... had been forced to change their strategies and the language they used in relation to the camps'(p.53).

144 Schoeman, *Only Anguish to Live Here*, pp.98-99.

145 *Ibid.*, p.98.

146 *De Middellandsche Afrikaander*, 3 April 1900.

ancestors, and the deaths of the likes of Retief and Uys 'en nog honderde martelaren en martelaressen van den Grooten Trek' ['and hundreds more male and female martyrs of the Great Trek']. And as one impassioned speaker said of the origins of the present 'onrechtvaardige oorlog' ['unjust war'], 'niemand kan het betwisten dat het de kapitalisten zyn met behulp van eenige heertjies ...' ['it's a known fact that it was started by the capitalists with the help of a few little lords ...'] But they protested as 'gewillige onderdane' ['loyal subjects'] of the Queen. A speaker who urged that disunity harmed 'de Afrikaander zaak' ['the Afrikaner cause'] spoke for 'Zuid-Afrikaansche' ['South African'] mothers and daughters and warned of the dangers that enmity between the 'civilised races' in South Africa posed. If women had not visibly participated in the political culture of the late nineteenth century, they were well versed in the ambiguously anti-imperialist discourse of the day. They also spoke of 'onze parlementleden' ['our members of parliament'] and saw themselves as political participants in anti-war activity:

Wy, die alles in ons vermogen hebben gedaan om den oorlog te vermyden hebben het recht om onze stemmen in deze zaak te laten horen. Onze Afrikaaner parlementleden zonden petities, onze predikanten zonden petities, en wy moeders en dochters zonden petities;- doch te vergeefs...¹⁴⁷

[We, who did everything in our power to avoid the war have the right to make our voices heard in this matter. Our Afrikaner members of parliament sent petitions, our ministers sent petitions, we mothers and daughters sent petitions, but in vain...]

What was public reaction to this development? More specifically, how did male politicians, journalists and churchmen respond to women's sudden emergence on the political scene? Reaction in the English press was unequivocal. The London weekly *South Africa* ridiculed participants as 'the shrieking sisterhood' - a phrase more typically applied to English suffragettes. A popular Cape Town weekly wrote that 'the cackle at the Metropolitan Hall Hen Convention was an hysterical affair, quite to the liking of Olive Schreiner'.¹⁴⁸ In stark contrast, Dutch newspapers indignantly protested against talk of 'silly women'.¹⁴⁹ Olive Schreiner was '(e)en dame die in haar kleinpinkje meer verstand heeft dan vele leaderschryvertjes in hun geheel hersenpan hebben ...' ['a lady who has more sense in her little finger than many little editors have in their heads...']¹⁵⁰ News of the London protest and similar meetings planned in the western Cape prompted *De Middelandische Afrikaander*

147 *Het Oosten*, 18 Oct. 1900.

148 *South Africa* and *The Owl*, as quoted in Schoeman, *Only Anguish to live Here*, pp.102-3.

149 *De Middelandische Afrikaander*, 24 Aug. 1900.

150 *Het Oosten*, 18 Oct. 1900.

to urge that Cradock's women follow suit. Evidently, the editor was still torn between enthusiasm for women's participation in anti-war protest and unease at women actually speaking in public:

Wat gaan de vrouwen, de moeders en zusters alhier doen? Zullen zy niet ook hier in vergadering byeenkomen? Kunnen zy niet Cradock tot een centrum maken van een groot Vrouwen Congress voor de Middellanden? Het is niet noodig om lange toespraken te houden op zulk een kongres, want praten helpt niet, er is genoeg gesproken; maar de vrouwen kunnen op zulk een kongres hare gevoelens in een paar goed opgestelde resoluties te kennen geven ... nu, wie neemt het voortouw?¹⁵¹

[What are the women, the mothers and sisters going to do? Should they not also hold a meeting here? Could they not make Cradock into the centre for a great Women's Congress of the Midlands? It would not be necessary to make long speeches at such a congress, because talking does not help, enough has been said; but the women could express their feelings in a few well-written resolutions ... so, who will take the lead?]

In the fervent atmosphere of anti-war activity, however, such reservations were rarely voiced. (The long speeches delivered in Cradock some weeks later were printed in full under the banner 'de Stem der Vrouw' ['The Voice of Woman'].) More often, women were praised and admired for their hitherto undisclosed skills. As 'Opregte Afrikaner' ['True Afrikaner'] from Bedford wrote to *Het Oosten*,

... ik heb my ieder keer verwonderdt, dat er zulke goede en verstandige spreeksters onder onze moeders en zusters zyn, waarlyk ze praten ons mans ver voorby. En nogal, daar het de eerste maal is, dat onze moeders en zusters in het publiek hebben, en moesten spreken...¹⁵²

[Time and again I marvelled that such skilled and sensible speakers are to be found amongst our mothers and sisters. Indeed they far outdo us men, even though this is the first time that our mothers and daughters have had the chance, and have had to, speak in public...]

The novelty of female public speakers was also subsumed in a discourse emphasising their maternal attributes and familial responsibility - thus presenting no threat to the patriarchal order. These were mothers and daughters acting in the interests of husbands and brothers, sons and future generations. Women's maternal duties involved special obligations to family (and as the discourse emphasised, their menfolk) as well as community. *De Middellandsche Afrikaander* wrote approvingly of Cradock women's decision to organise a meeting:

Dat is recht. Het is nu ook de tyd voor de moeders en dochters om te werken, want de dag zal komen dat zy rekenschap zullen moet geven aan hun kroost van wat zy in deze kritieken tyd gedaan hebben voor hunne nakomelingen...¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ *De Middellandsche Afrikaander*, 29 July 1900.

¹⁵² *Het Oosten*, 22 Nov. 1900.

¹⁵³ *De Middellandsche Afrikaander*, 17 July 1900.

[That is proper. The mothers and daughters should also work now, because the day will arrive when they must give account to their children of what they did in these critical times for their descendants...]

In the context of small-town South Africa, where it was increasingly difficult to maintain a modicum of neutrality, proper conduct for women was probably less at issue than their political support.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, as news of harsh retributive British war tactics reached the Cape in the latter part of 1900, consensus in the anti-war press was (as one correspondent put it) that 'zwijgen is zondig, spreken is dure plicht...' ['Silence is sinful, speaking out is bounden duty...']¹⁵⁵ The British war effort now involved retribution overwhelmingly aimed against women and children. As news filtered through of their evacuation to refugee camps, *de stem der vrouw* became the appropriate vehicle for the expression of moral indignation:

De Moeders en dochters hebben voorwaar recht om over die zaak te spreken, en hunne stemmen te laten hooren, want ... [het is] duidelijk dat de moeders en kinders [in de Republieken] de party is die het bitterste onder dit alles lyden ... wie zal het de Afrikaansche vrouw ten kwade duiden als zy het zwijgen niet kan bedwingen?¹⁵⁶

[The Mothers and daughters certainly have the right to speak out on that matter, and to let their voices be heard, because ... it is clear that mothers and children [in the Republics] are suffering the most ... who will hold it against the Afrikaans woman if she cannot remain silent?]

But what did the women themselves say of their newfound role? Many did not bother to refer to the novelty of the occasion but launched into speeches detailing the history of the Boer republics, the capitalist greed that caused the war, and the latest atrocities committed by the British. Others asserted their duty to speak out in the context of war and the suffering of fellow *Afrikaanders*, and expressed their sense of a country-wide protest movement of 'moeders en dochters'. Mrs Jan Jordaan (as with most *platteland* women, her public first name was her husband's) made an impassioned call at the meeting held in her home town, Cradock:

154 See for example, C. Louis Leipoldt's *Stormwrack* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1980), a novel written soon after the South African War and set in an anonymous, war-time Cape village. Leipoldt, who was a newspaper correspondent during the war, explored the ways in which political tension tore apart small communities.

155 *Het Oosten*, 29 Nov. 1900. Women were directly and harshly affected by the South African War, and especially so by the retributive policies followed by the British. Farm houses and crops were destroyed from March 1900, and a policy of 'refugee camps' started from September. By the end of the war, about forty camps housed more than 116 000 people. 27 927 Boers, including 22 000 children under 16 and 4 000 adult women had by then died in the camps. S.B. Spies, 'Women and the war' in P. Warwick (ed.), *The South African War, 1899-1902* (Harlow: Longman, 1980) provides a brief account.

156 *Het Oosten* (editorial), 11 Oct. 1900.

Vriendinnen laten wy spreken voor ons recht, laat ons pleiten voor ons natie, laat ons met onze monden en harten vechten voor ons volk. Wat konden wy anders doen dan om genade smeeken! Wy kunnen niet langer zwygen. Ons volk gaat onder. Laat ons onze stemmen verheffen. Eendracht maakt macht. Overal hebben de moeders en dochters van Zuid Afrika zich laten hooren, ook wy kunnen niet zwygen...¹⁵⁷

[My women friends, let us demand our rights, let us plead for our nation, let us fight with our mouths and hearts for our people. What can we do but ask for mercy! We can no longer remain silent. Our people are being destroyed. Let us raise our voices. Unity makes strength. Everywhere the mothers and daughters of South Africa are speaking up, we too can no longer remain silent...]

Occasionally, speakers reflected more broadly on their newfound role. Mrs Gert (Elizabeth) Jordaan, also from Cradock, emphasised the novelty of Afrikaans women taking public action. Like the editors of pro-Boer newspapers, she emphasised women's duty to family and *volk*. War made speaking out imperative:

Het is geene kleinigheid voor de Afrikaansche vrouw uit haar gewoon element van terughoudendheid te gaan, doch wy voelen gedrongen elkander te helpen om de banier van persoonlyke vryheid juist nu in de Afrikaansche lucht te laat wapperen. Hiervoor hebben onze vaderen zwaar geleden, velen hun bloed gestort, anderen hun land prys gegeven, van daag willen wy de wereld zeggen dat wy vrouwen, de kroost van zulke mannen, niet vreezen te verklaren dat macht *geen recht is*. Het is nu niet de tyd om stil te veroordeelen, dit kan nadeelig werken voor ons volk, stilzwygen is instemmen...¹⁵⁸

[It is no small thing for the Afrikaans woman to leave behind her usual reserve, but we feel compelled to help each other and that we must now let the flag of personal freedom fly in the African sky. For this have our fathers suffered, for this much blood has been shed, and have others given up their land. Today we want to tell the world that we women, the kin of such men, are not afraid to declare that might *does not make right*. Now is not the time to pass silent judgement; that could be detrimental to our people. To remain silent is to acquiesce...]

A speaker from tiny Pearston in the Cape Midlands noted that the unusual circumstances of war both pressed, and for the first time sanctioned women's entering a male sphere usually closed to women:

Het gebeurt maar zelden dat de stem der vrouw in publieke vergaderinge gehoren wordt, en het is geheel en al buitengewoon om eene publieke vergadering by te wonen waar het woord uitsluitelyk door vrouwen gevoerd wordt. Komt men op zulk eene vergadering dan gevoelt men dadelyk dat slechts ernstiger en buitengewone omstandighede de moeders en [vrouwen] genoopt konden hebben om te spreken op eene plaats alwaar gewoonlyk slechts de stem des mans gehoord word; en het zwygen de vrouw opgelegd is. En dit is met ons vandaag het geval.¹⁵⁹

[It is but seldom that a woman's voice is heard at a public meeting, and altogether exceptional to participate in a public meeting where women alone are speaking. When one attends such a meeting, it is immediately clear that only grave and

157 *De Middellandsche Afrikaander*, 4 Sept. 1900. However, Elizabeth Jordaan, otherwise known as Mrs Gert Jordaan, did sign her letter to the paper with her own first name.

158 *Ibid.*, 19 Oct. 1900.

159 *Ibid.*

extraordinary circumstances could have forced the mothers and [women] to speak out in places where only the voices of men are usually heard, and women are expected to remain silent. And this is what is happening here today.]

But how is one to explain this sudden entrance of Dutch-Afrikaans women onto the political scene? Pressure to speak out, and the space allowed women to do so in the extraordinary circumstances of the war, do not adequately explain the extent and nature of women's participation. By all accounts, women were virtually absent from local and national politics before the war. Yet in a matter of weeks they organised successful public meetings where dozens of Dutch-Afrikaans women performed as confident, even eloquent public speakers. Who were these women, and what shaped their willingness and ability to take public, political action?

Women who acted as key speakers, and certainly those who belonged to the *vrouwen* committees, also came from a specific social strata. *De Middellandsche Afrikaander* had encouraged the district's 'voorstste moeders en dochters' ['foremost mothers and daughters'] to protest - in Cradock and Somerset East, the husbands of most speakers were indeed *dominees*, local councillors and leading figures of the *Afrikaner Bond*.¹⁶⁰ As such, the women lived in town, or on relatively prosperous farms - very likely, they were largely overseers rather than direct participants in domestic labour and thus free to play a more active public role.¹⁶¹ The wives of prominent men also took leading roles in the albeit circumscribed social activities open to women in *platteland* towns. Significantly, towns hosting protest meetings had been centres of religious activity some four decades ago. Women from well-placed families were long accustomed to lead prayer meetings for female church members, raise funds for their local church and missions, and teach in Sunday schools.

160 *Het Oosten*, 22 March 1900; 19 April 1900; 7 July 1900; 6 Sept. 1900.

161 Even so, women still shouldered a considerable burden of work at home. A contributor to *De Wekker* (Aug. 1902) recounted how her ability to handle the double burden of household duties and attending meetings was severely taxed; realising the spiritual worth of domestic work helped her survive. With illness in the house and guests coming to stay she hired an additional servant who couldn't cook; her own servant fell ill. Her contribution was called 'Heaven in the Kitchen':

'My experience of cooking was then still limited, and the kitchen oven very difficult, but His power overcame all difficulties and the result was proof that no one can work such wonders as the almighty ... meanwhile I had to lead various meetings, with little time to prepare, and with my mind so full of household worries that it was difficult to concentrate on anything else. But His unlimited power is revealed through those that place themselves in their service...' (My translation.)

If at the outbreak of the South African War women were strangers to public action, a significant number of female Dutch-Afrikaans speakers had benefited from higher education. The *jonge juffrouens* (young unmarried women) who often shared the platform with married women as speakers, secretaries and even chairpersons were almost certainly products of the Huguenot Seminary and similar schools founded in the 1870s.¹⁶² Their organisational and oratorical skills had thus been taught in the interests of evangelical activism. Moreover, many graduates would have belonged to the *Vrouwen Zending Bond*, and thus participated in the well-established network of mission-supporting women. Very likely, this network also facilitated war-time political organisation in the Cape. It is surely not coincidental, for example, that Cradock's *vrouwen* committee met just after the *Vrouwen Zending Bond* meeting.¹⁶³

Women's wide-spread participation in war-time protests also related to the impact of war on white, Dutch-Afrikaans speakers in the Colony. Women were goaded into action because (so they explained) military authorities treated Dutch-Afrikaans speakers unjustly. Local papers printed not only lists of the dead and prisoners-of-war, but also the names of 'rebelle' imprisoned under martial law. Female speakers at the public meetings complained bitterly about 'partial law' and 'rassen wetgewing' ['race laws'] that discriminated against Dutch Afrikaners and disrupted 'alle zedelyke en handels betrekkinge' ['all moral and commercial matters'] in their districts. Under this 'afwezigheid van wet' ['absence of law'], men were arrested on the 'mere' evidence of blacks, publicly humiliated regardless of age and status, and jailed without trial. Women's entry into the public sphere was surely related to the new roles they assumed in the absence of men:

terwyl de *man* alzo in de gevangenis zit, moet de *vrouw* daaronder lyden. Zy moet de plaats bestieren, en haar gezin onderhouden. Zy, fyn opgebracht als velen onzer, moet zich bloot stellen aan menigerlei ongemakken, en dikwels aanstootelykheden ... daarom gevoelen wij als vrouwen en moeders dat hoewel onze mannen en parlementleden er niet in geslaagd zyn de krygswet opgeheven te krygen dat wy niet kunnen rusten totdat wy ook onze stemmen hebben doen horen.¹⁶⁴

[while the *husband* sits in jail, the *woman* must suffer. *She* must run the farm, and support the family. *She*, finely brought up as are many of us, must expose herself to numerous discomforts, and often unpleasantness ... therefore we as wives and mothers feel that although our husbands and members of parliament could not manage to get martial law suspended, we cannot rest until we have also made our voices heard.]

162 *De Middellandsche Afrikaander*, 3 July 1900; 4 Sept. 1900; 19 Oct. 1900; 22 Nov 1900.

163 *Ibid.*, 1 May 1900.

164 *Het Oosten*, 25 Oct. 1900.

Men may have participated in fewer local protest meetings because they were more likely to be charged with transgressing proclamations warning against action or speech that could disturb the peace or encourage disloyalty to the Crown.¹⁶⁵ However, after the women's protests British authorities also perceived Dutch-Afrikaans women as a threat. At the end of 1900, martial law was extended to Cradock. Mrs Elizabeth Jordaan and fellow members of the town's *vrouwen* committee were banned to Port Alfred; they were obliged to stay there for a year.¹⁶⁶

To what extent did women's war-time political activity change prevalent perceptions in Dutch-Afrikaans communities of women's role in society, and specifically the appropriateness of women taking public, political action? If skills gained in the service of Christ proved useful in the war, the gender discourse of late nineteenth century evangelical Protestantism also informed war-time notions of women's role. As in the language of the DRC's religious journals, women described themselves as mothers. 'De Stem der Vrouw' carried moral weight because for three decades, the pervasive discourse of the DRC had idealised women as teachers and guardians of morality. Of course, the bold actions of female war-time protestors were a far cry from the quiet piety prescribed by the church. These were not *biddende moeders* content to pray in the privacy of homes, but female orators proclaiming their dissent on stage.

And yet, women's political activity during the war took place within specific limits: this was extraordinary action in extraordinary times, taken by 'mothers' and 'daughters'. The speaker from Pearston had pointed to the 'geheel en al buitengewoon' ['entirely unusual'] phenomenon of public meetings addressed by women alone. That women claimed a space in public, where they alone took political action, was indeed a radical departure. But conversely, precisely because this was a separate space, women did not fundamentally challenge gender roles and the definition of the political sphere as male territory. In fact, the meetings still resembled the women's only prayer meetings and *werkgezelschappen* of previous decades. The *vrouwen vergaderinge* were addressed, and apparently attended by women only (apart from a sprinkling of male journalists), and so did not fundamentally challenge a social order that posited separate spheres for men and women. At the

165 The proclamations appeared on the front cover of local newspapers. *Het Oosten* of 14 May 1900 reported on a protest meeting organised by Dutch Afrikaners in Cradock. However, the *Afrikaner Bond* postponed its annual congress for several months because of the 'teenswoordige landsomstandigheden' ['present situation in the country'].

166 CA, DRC, V21 (Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging Collection), 1/1/1 (report of negotiations between members of the 'Vrouwen Federatie' of Stellenbosch and 'leden der Kongres').

Volkskongresse where their male counterparts in the *verzoeningsbeweging* took a public stand against the war, women's presence was far less evident. At the first *volkskongres*, Dutch-Afrikaans women remained silent. The second *volkskongres* took place in December 1900 - in other words, after the series of protests by women. Again, this was an event dominated by men. Elizabeth Roos and Johanna Steytler attended but did not speak, and the *jongejuffrouens* were commended for their coffee and sandwiches, not their oratorical skills. And yet, that the women's activism had made some, albeit marginal impact was evidenced by the participation of at least one woman in discussion. That a Mrs Van Zyl from Hanover - apparently not a well-known public figure - and not Roos or Steytler spoke (although a letter from Mrs Koopmans-de Wet was read) reflects the grass-roots nature of women's protest. Appropriately for a female speaker, Van Zyl supported a resolution against British treatment of women and children. Claiming to speak for all Afrikaans women, her modest address expressed strong nationalist sentiments:

Zy stond daar als vrouw om haar zwakke kracht mee te geven tot ondersteuning van het werk uit drang van haar gevoel, en haar eenige trots is haar Afrikaander nationaliteit ... zij was op't platform gekomen eenvoudig om dat te zeggen, en zy hoopte dat de voorgestelde resolutie ... zou worden aangenomen en dat haar woorden zouden worden beschouwd als een blyk van't gevoel dat ligt op de bodem van't hart van ieder Afrikaansche vrouw.¹⁶⁷

[She stood there as a woman, compelled by strong conviction to offer her lesser strength for the cause, her only pride her *Afrikaander* nationality ... she had come to the platform simply to say this, and she hoped that the resolution ... would be accepted and that her words would be regarded as proof of the feeling that lies in the heart of every Afrikaans woman.]

Conclusion

Perusal of the existing literature on Boer women in the nineteenth century suggest that they were largely absent from politics. But to assume that no discourse dealing with women and women's roles existed before 1900 is to ignore developments within the Dutch Reformed Church, a pivotal institution in the lives of many Dutch-Afrikaans speakers.

From the 1860s, many Dutch-Afrikaans women joined new church-related organisations - the context was an evangelical Protestantism that encouraged the active participation of DRC members. The 1870s also saw the advent of seminaries for Dutch-Afrikaans girls, a venture initiated by the DRC. Civil institutions in the Colony were now no longer entirely

¹⁶⁷ *Het Oosten*, 13 Dec. 1900.

dominated by men. The seminaries were run and staffed by women, and boosted female participation in mission work. Many Dutch-Afrikaans women were now actively participating in prayer circles and their own mission-support organisation, the *Vrouwen Zending Bond*. The new opportunities for education also opened up new career possibilities for women. Many seminary graduates taught for a few years before they opted for marriage and children. Others established independent careers as teachers and missionaries.

The final decades of the century also saw the development of a new gender discourse in the religious journals of the DRC. Women's increasingly active roles encouraged *predikanten* to address them specifically as readers - and to construct explicit ideals of pious motherhood. Occasionally, writers acknowledged, even approved of women taking on new roles. But the dominant message was that women had to live out their evangelical fervour and exercise their moral powers within the confines of the family, as *biddende moeders*. Churchmen also published explicit explanations that male authority and female subservience was sanctioned by God.

The ethnic politics that emerged in the Cape Colony during the late nineteenth century did not have visible female participants. Cultural journals of the time portrayed women in domesticated, non-political roles. Women were also sometimes mentioned in diatribes against Dutch-Afrikaans speakers who accepted the growing cultural dominance of English. Women themselves participated in the newly emerging, ethnicised discourse identifying a 'poor white problem'.

More unusual was their organising a petition calling for peace in the war-threatened atmosphere of the late 1890s. It was in the South African War that Dutch-Afrikaans women unequivocally entered the terrain of politics. Women took the lead in anti-war protests, and the many *vrouwen vergaderinge* held in 1900 were explicitly political. Very likely, the oratorical and organisational skills displayed by the women reflected a specific educational background - these were graduates of the DRC-sponsored seminaries and members of the *Vrouwen Zending Bond* and other church-related associations. If women had not visibly contributed to the construction of late nineteenth century ethno-political discourses, speeches at the protest meetings indicated that many had absorbed the popular history and politics promoted in Dutch print culture. Many participants in the protest meetings articulated both their identification with the Boer republics and a colonial nationalism.

The women's protest opened up a space for political activity, but within definite limits. Dutch-Afrikaans women had claimed a public space for themselves, and in the context of a divisive war, the pro-Boer press supported their unprecedented action. But conversely,

Dutch-Afrikaans women (and to a lesser extent, their English counterparts in the anti-war movement) spoke at all-female meetings. Women were still virtually absent from a male-dominated political sphere. What role would the delegates to the women's protest meetings play in the irrevocably changed context of post-war South Africa?

Chapter Two

**`Kerk, Volk en Taal' (`Church, People and Language'):
The Early years of the ACVV, 1904-1918**



Plate 3. Elizabeth Roos, ACVV president, 1904-1923.



Plates 4 and 5. Delegates to the 1906 and (overleaf) 1910 congresses of the ACVV.



Mev. MARGARETHA E. DE BEER, geboren BOSMAN, Echtgenote
van ds. Z. J. DE BEER, van Woodstock, en moeder van Mej. E.
DE BEER, B.A.



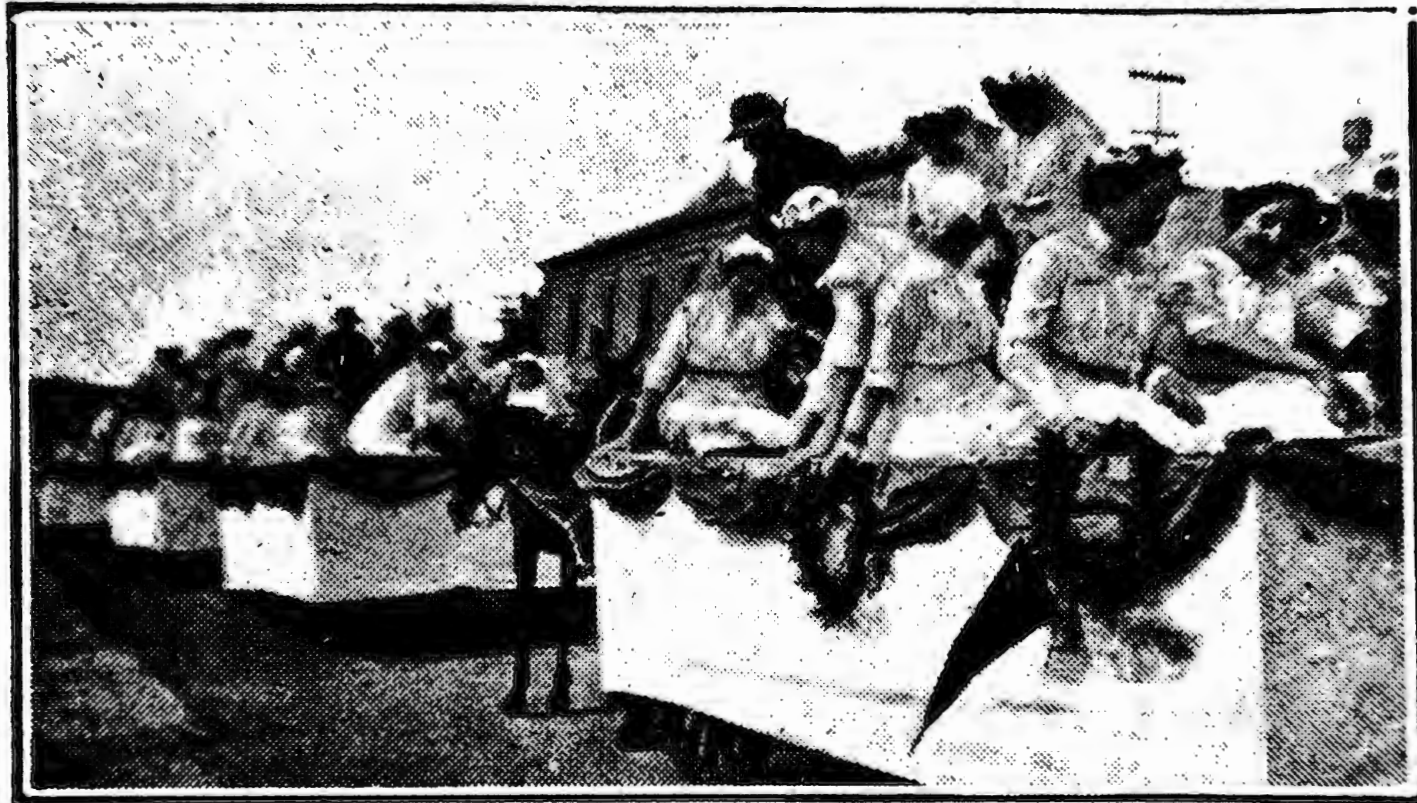
De bekwaame en onvermoeide Penningmeesteresse der A.C.V.V., Presidente der Z.A. Nationale Unie :—een ernstige nationalist in woord en daad : een vrouw die voor niets teruggaat, waar het de belangen van haar Taal, Natie of Kerk geldt. Gedurende de oorlog werd zij gekozen als een van de woordvoersters der grote vrouwen-vergaderingen, die gehouden werden om te protesteren tegen de oorlog en vooral tegen de behandeling van de vrouwen en kinderen der Republikeinen, en zij kweekte zich uitstekend van de taak. Met dat alles is zij een echt vrouwelijke vrouw en heeft geen sympathie met de suffragette-beweging.

Plate 6. 'Mrs Margaretha E. de Beer, born Bosman, spouse of Ds. Z.J. de Beer, of Woodstock, and mother of Miss E. de Beer, B.A.'
When this picture appeared in *Eendrag* of July 1909, she was treasurer of the ACVV.

Vier geslachten van de familie Claassens, van Victoria West, tegelijk leden
van de A.C.V.V.



Plate 7 'Four generations of the family Claassens, of Victoria West, all members of the ACVV' (*De Goede Hoop*, 1914).



Op weg na die Vrouwemonument, Bloemfontein, in 1913.

Plate 8. 'On the way to the Women's Monument, Bloemfontein, in 1913'. This photograph and the images on the following two pages (plates 9 and 10) all appeared in the 'ACVV' pages of Die Huisgenoot, January 1913.



Die Voortrekkersvrouw.

Plate 9. The source of 'The Voortrekker Woman' was Leon Cachet's *De Worstelstrijd der Transvalers aan het Volk van Nederland Verhaal* (The Struggle of the Transvalers Told to the People of the Netherlands), first published in 1882.



Plate 10. Mrs S.A. Krige, The winner of the competition for the best 'Voortrekker Women's Wear' in Barkley-East, Dingaan's Day, 1918.

Chapter Two

1. The Founding of the ZACVV, its Structure and Leadership

If women were still excluded from men's politics after the war, some Dutch-Afrikaans women were quick to claim the space for women's organisation legitimated by war-time action. In October 1900, Mrs Elizabeth Jordaan of the *Cradock Vroue Comité* (Cradock Women's Committee) had already expressed a wish that bonds created between women would persist beyond their war-time activities:

Deze aaneensluiting en hartelyke samewerking hoop ik zal niet ophouden zelfs nadat deze werelds gebeurtenissen dat zich nu in ons land afspelen zullen voorby zyn...¹

[I hope that this coming together and warm co-operation will continue even after the conclusion of the momentous events now taking place in our land...]

Jordaan was certainly not slow to act. Her organisation, called the *Afrikander vroue comité* by at least March 1901, was temporarily silenced by the extension of martial law to Cradock and a year's exile in Port Alfred. Shortly after the war, Jordaan wrote to the women from Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Somerset East who had played leading roles in the protest movement. The ladies of Somerset East and Elizabeth Roos and friends in Cape Town soon followed with similar organisations - and Roos's group launched the *Zuid Afrikaansche Vrouwe Vereeniging*, conceived of as a national organisation, in 1904. The organisation was soon renamed the *Zuid Afrikaansche Christelyke Vrouwe Vereeniging* (South African *Christian* Women's Organisation).²

Some Dutch-Afrikaans speakers were also joining another women's organisation. Mrs Georgina Solomon, married to the Jewish politician and proprietor of Cape Town's

Note: Material from countryside branch minute books (in CA, A1953) is footnoted with the archival reference, the name of the branch's town or village (for example Add. 1/5/5/1/1/1 (Keimoes) and the date of the meeting.

1 *De Middellandsche Afrikaander*, 19 Oct. 1900. For the most part, well-to-do Dutch-Afrikaans women were still writing in 'High Dutch'. However, their spelling and grammar reflected varying degrees of proficiency in a language that was very different from everyday speech.

2 Cape Archives (hereafter CA), A1953 (Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging Private Collection), A1/1/1/1 (minutes of ACVV meetings), 14 April and 1 Sept. 1904. My emphasis. Early archival material on the 'ZACVV' is filed together with documents from 1906 onwards, when the organisation was renamed the *Afrikaanse Christelyke Vrouwe Vereeniging* or ACVV (see below). The latter acronym has been used for all archival references. In this chapter, I also refer to the ACVV as the 'Vereeniging' to reflect the older spelling (instead of 'Vereniging').

newspaper *The Argus*, founded the Zuid-Afrikaansche Vrouwe Federatie (ZAVF) in 1903.³ Dutch-Afrikaans and English speakers were members. In the former republics, such prominent women as Tibbie Steyn, married to the former president and Annie Botha, wife of General Louis Botha played leading roles in the ZAVF.

From the beginning, the *Zuid Afrikaansche Christelyke Vrouwe Vereeniging* (ZACVV) functioned as a network of local women's organisations extending through the Cape (and at first, in the Transvaal and Orange Free State). Women from *platteland* towns and hamlets forged links with those in industrialising centres through congresses, columns in church and popular magazines and collective social work projects. Dutch newspapers avidly followed the ZACVV's activities with detailed reports of local branch meetings, annual reports, social events and congresses. At its second congress in April 1906, the ZACVV claimed 34 branches and 1600 members; by June 1907 its membership was 3000.⁴ In the more prosperous eastern and western regions, women living in town usually dominated meetings, although 'buitevrouens' from surrounding farms were also drawn in. Significantly, branches were first established in the more developed and prosperous farming regions of the western and eastern Cape. The network soon extended into the Karoo: well-to-do Victoria West boasted a branch by 1905, and by 1906 delegates from the Karoo village Carnarvon and northern Cape hamlet Ritchie attended the ZACVV congress. Branches in the harbour towns East London and Port Elizabeth were established by 1910 and remained relatively weak, but a vigorous Cape Town branch exerted an influence on general policy well beyond its actual numbers.

While key women from the war-time committees that organised protest meetings now belonged to the ZACVV, post-war structures of the new women's organisation differed in important respects. A feature of the protest meetings had been the large numbers of women who took to the platform to address fellow delegates. Prominent women acted as key organisers and speakers, but an atmosphere of grassroots participation and spontaneity characterised proceedings.

In contrast, a few key women now controlled the new women's organisation. As the wives of men highly placed in the Dutch Reformed Church, (and hence main speakers at the western Cape protest meetings), Johanna Steytler and especially Elizabeth Roos assumed

3 Karel Schoeman, *Only Anguish to Live Here: Olive Schreiner and the Anglo-Boer War, 1899 - 1902* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1992), p.206.

4 P. H. Zietsman, *Die Taal is Gans die Volk: Woelinge en Dryfvere in die Stryd om die Afrikaner se Taal* (Pretoria: UNISA, 1992), p.49.

leading roles. In 1900, the demands and opinions of scores of women (albeit white, middle-class and Dutch-Afrikaans) were reported in the papers. Now, as the ZACVV's first president, Roos interpreted the organisation's rules for members and presented its aims to the press. To a lesser extent, other executive members from the oldest branches (Cape Town, Stellenbosch) - soon members of a *hoofbestuur* with overall authority - also performed this function.

The three-day annual congresses, hosted by a different town every year, were pivotal to the functioning of the ZACVV. Every April, this gathering strengthened ties between women from across the Cape. Representatives from branches first listened to guest speakers, usually prominent academics and churchmen. Roos then followed with an *openingsrede* (key-note address) that detailed the moral and practical issues of the day. Afterwards, the congress set to work: prior to the event, branches had sent *beschrijwingspunten* (proposed resolutions) to the executive. Delegates now proceeded to discuss and vote on the proposals. The congresses combined branch level participation in decision-making with strong direction from executive members. When delegates raised sensitive issues, leading women deftly explained policy or curtailed discussion.

From 1905, the ZACVV reserved a few pages in *De Goede Hoop*, a popular monthly combining poems and stories with church news, reminiscences from the war and discussions about the future of Dutch and Afrikaans. Branch and executive reports were spiced with appropriate religious texts; Roos and Steytler also continued a late nineteenth century practice by providing moral and spiritual guidance with *zusterlijke brieven* (sisterly letters) - as befitted their status as the wives of *predikanten*.

Eley has pointed to 'the need to constitute nations through processes of imaginative labour ... the manufactured or invented character (of national culture)', and to the primary role of 'the lower and middle professional, administrative and intellectual strata, in other words, the *educated classes*' in the formative stages of nationalist movements.⁵ Significantly, executive members of urban and rural branches of the ZACVV were mostly the wives of *dominees*, teachers and university academics - precisely those males most prominent in the construction of Afrikaner nationalism. In founding the ZACVV, Roos and Steytler made good use of the DRC infrastructure available to them. Prior to the ZACVV's founding, they presented the proposed constitution to the wives of *predikanten* at the annual Synod meeting.⁶ At their first meeting, it was decided to send 200 copies of the rules to 'elke

5 G. Eley, 'Nationalism and Social History', *Social History* 6 (1981), p.92.

6 CA, A1953, A1/1/1/1 (report filed with minutes of ACVV meetings), 1904.

predikants vrouw der Hollandsche kerk' ['every minister's wife in the Dutch church'].⁷ From its earliest years the ZACVV started branches in rural areas by contacting the local *predikantsvrouw* (minister's wife).⁸

A (white) Women's Who's Who from 1913 provides an illuminating glimpse of the social profiles and backgrounds of women who led the ZACVV (later the ACVV) for the first fifteen years or so of its existence. A large number of key women were graduates from the Huguenot Seminary or its 'sister' schools in Worcester, Wellington, Stellenbosch and Paarl; a shared interest in mission-work reflected this background. Except for some younger members, all were married - mostly to well-to-do farmers, businessmen or ministers. Few of these middle-class women had more than four or five children, and most were in their thirties or forties when the ZACVV was founded.

At fifty-eight Elizabeth Roos (*see plate 3*) was several years older than most of her colleagues and had no children. The daughter of a prominent Stellenbosch farmer, she married a DRC minister and moved to Alexandria in 1869. When English-medium higher education for girls came in vogue, she was already *predikantsvrouw* in the eastern Cape.⁹ In 1892 her husband was promoted to the powerful position of Commissioner for the DRC and they moved to Cape Town. Johannes Roos was also editor of *De Kerkbode* (the DRC's official publication) until his death in 1909. Like her husband, Roos was prominently involved in protest work during the South African War.

Other *predikantsvrouwen* also figured prominently in the ZACVV. Margaretha ('Maggie') de Beer (*plate 6*) was married to the DRC minister for Woodstock, a poor inner city suburb in Cape Town. A Huguenot Seminary graduate, her three children's names (Elaine, Ray, Dan) reflected her English education. Like Roos, De Beer was involved in prisoner relief work and the war-time protests. By 1913, she also worked for the Ladies Benevolent Society, the *Vrouwen Zending Bond* and the SA Council of Women Workers. Magdalena

7 CA, A1953, A1/1/1/1 (Minutes of ACVV meetings), 1 Sept. 1904.

8 CA, Archives of the Dutch Reformed Church (hereafter DRC), V21 (Dutch Reformed Church ACVV collection), 1/1 (Minutes of ACVV executive meetings), 10 Feb. 1906.

9 She was educated 'in Stellenbosch and Cape Town' - but the first high school for girls, the Good Hope Seminary, was only founded in 1873. Roos herself was known for her contribution to girls' education in Alexandria; the fact that she tutored girls in English and Dutch literature suggests that she herself had some form of tuition as a young woman. (J.A.S. Oberholster, *Eeufees-Gedenkboek van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Gemeente Alexandria* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1954), pp.29-30.)

Schonken (who shared the same alma mater) did missionary work alongside her husband before moving to Stellenbosch, where she became secretary of the local branch and the central executive. She was in her mid-forties at the ACVV's founding. Susanna Marais, *predikantsvrouw* at Beaconsfield near Kimberley, was president of the local ACVV and VZB and had four children. Also a Huguenot graduate, she had served on a relief committee for the Kimberley concentration camp during the war.

Other women were married to members of parliament or men prominent in local business and politics. Johanna Claassens (*plate 7*), seminary graduate and mother of four, was married to a member of the Legislative Council. She was executive member and president of the Victoria West branch and helped found a number of rural ZACVVs. Unlike many of her more prominent colleagues, farmer's wife Susan Heynike was educated at a farm school and had eight step-children. By 1913 her husband - a prominent farmer in the district - was town councillor for Stellenbosch. The president of the Worcester ACVV, educated at the local seminary, was married to a solicitor and school board secretary. But widowed Alida Cilliers - mother of five and active in Paarl's ACVV and VZB - was of independent means. Yet another Huguenot Seminary graduate, she 'managed one of the largest farms in the Paarl District' (being 'the holder of numerous Cups, Medals and Prizes obtained at Agricultural Shows for Wheat, Cattle, etc').¹⁰

2. 'A Great Deal of Bitterness': the Women's Organisations and Competing Nationalisms after the War, 1903 - 1907

The ZACVV's constitution (1904) urged women to promote 'alles wat zuiver Afrikaansch is en tot hulp en opbouwing van Taal en Volk kan strekken' ['all that is pure Afrikaans and will help to build Language and People'].¹¹ At the launch of the *Vereeniging*, Roos revealed an ethnic nationalism that urged *moeders en dochters* to take action in the face of 'foreign influences' threatening the *Afrikaander Volk*:

10 T. H. Lewis, *Women of South Africa, a Historical, Educational and Industrial Encyclopaedia and Social Directory of the Women of the Sub-continent* (Cape Town: Le Quesne and Hooton-Smith, 1913), pp.14-243; 'Catalogue of the Boards of the Huguenot Seminary, Wellington', *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 1896, pp.27-50; Lou-Marié Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity: Women and Afrikaner nationalism in the Volksmoeder discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919-1931' (M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1991), pp.61-62.

11 First constitution of the ACVV, as quoted in H.C. Lambrechts, 'Die eerste vyftig jaar - die ontwikkeling van die werk van die Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1957), p.30.

Zy wees er op, dat uit allerlei landen vreemdelingen naar Zuid Afrika toestromen en zich onder het Afrikaansche Volk mengen en vestigen. De [?] instrooming dier vreemdelingen met hun vreemde zeden en gewoonten op het volk kon niet ontkend worden. De invloed die door vele dier vreemdelingen op het Z.Afr. Volk werd uitgeoefend was niet altijd ten goede, doch dikwijls ten nadeele van het Afrikaander volk. Het is duidelyk dat onser tegenwoordige omstandigheden, men moet gevoelen, als wij Kerk, volk en taal willen bewaren het meer dan tyd is dat wy als moeders en dochters van ons volk handelend optreden, daar met Gods hulp de toekomstige welvaart van ons volk heel van ons afhangt.¹²

[She pointed out that all sorts of foreigners were streaming to South Africa and mixing and settling amongst the Afrikaans people. The impact on this influx of foreigners with their foreign manners and customs on the people cannot be denied. The influence that many of these foreigners have had on the South African people has not always been positive, but has often been to the detriment of the Afrikaans people. It is clear that in our situation, if we want to preserve Church, people and language, we mothers and daughters must take urgent action, as with God's help the future well-being of our people depends entirely on us.]

But the oft-repeated '*kerk, volk, en taal*' ['church, people and language'] of the ZACVV's constitution were by no means uncontested categories. Indeed, South African politics immediately after the war featured competing ideologies of nationalism - and disputes amongst Dutch-Afrikaans and English women at the time reflected this. If Jordaan looked for post-war co-operation between all members of the pro-Boer alliance, her wish failed to materialise in the bitter post-war atmosphere. Peace had been made on Milner's terms, and to the harsh realities of economic and social devastation was added his programme of anglicisation. Martial law had also left its mark on the Cape's rural economy, and erstwhile sympathisers with the Boer republics faced suspicion and discrimination. For many Dutch-Afrikaans speakers, the Jameson raid of 1895 had been synonymous with British greed. In 1904 Jameson headed a coalition between the Progressives and the old South African Party and became Prime Minister.¹³ 'Politically, things are sadder than they have ever been', wrote Olive Schreiner to Betty Molteno in 1905.

The Afrianders are all quarrelling among each other. The two women's organisations hate each other with a hate that passes words, and the Women's Christian Union (not Mrs Solomon's, the other)* are fighting among themselves. There has been a bitter newspaper fight raging, no doubt as you saw in the S.A. News and the Cape Times, between Mrs Koopmans and Mrs Roos...¹⁵

12 CA, A1953, A1/1/1/1 (Minutes of ACVV meetings), 1907. The question mark indicates an illegible word.

13 Schoeman, *Only Anguish to Live Here*, p.201.

* Olive Schreiner was referring to the *Vereeniging*.

15 *Ibid.*, p.206.

This public dispute concerned the ZACVV's restrictive membership rules - only women of Protestant beliefs could belong to the organisation, and only Dutch could be used at meetings (Roos had added this stipulation to the Cradock organisation's rules). Of course, this excluded many women who had participated in pro-Boer demonstrations during the war, particularly English-speakers. In fact, Dutch-Afrikaans women who joined the other women's organisation founded in 1903 - the Zuid-Afrikaansche Vrouwe Federatie - thought differently about these matters.

The ZACVV's membership policy reflected a distinct shift in political allegiance and identification amongst a section of western Cape Dutch-Afrikaans speakers after the war. At wartime protest meetings, Dutch-Afrikaans women had claimed bonds of blood, language and a shared religion with the republics' defenders. But claims of an *Afrikaander* volk founded on notions of ethnic allegiance were made alongside references to a wider South African identity as members of the (white) 'civilised races'. Dutch-Afrikaans women spoke as *Zuid-Afrikaansche vrouwen* (South African women), and members of a *verzoeningsbeweging* (conciliation movement) that included English-speakers. In fact, their claims to be loyal British subjects seemed to run deeper than mere attempts to avoid accusations of rebellion against the Crown. At Paarl, Elizabeth Roos herself emphasised the duty of 'iedere moeder ... dat het haar dure plicht is hare kinderen op te voeden als loyale onderdanen van onze koningin ...' ['every mother ... it is her solemn duty to educate her children as loyal subjects of our queen ...']¹⁶ If Milner was callously indifferent to the mothers' 'liefde voor de belangen onzer zonen' ['devotion to the interests of our sons'] argued another speaker, surely the response of the Queen Mother 'als moeder van haar volk' ['as mother of her people'] would be compassionate.¹⁷

While alliances between the *Afrikaner Bond* and imperialist interests had been severely strained in the years immediately preceding the war, claims of a community based on

16 *De Middellandsche Afrikaander*, 3 July, 1900.

17 *Ibid.*, 3 July 1900. But see John X. Merriman's reaction to the women's protest meeting at Paarl. Apparently, the new generation of educated Dutch-Afrikaans women already began to move away from accepting England's sovereignty: 'The speeches will give you some notion of the way in which these women will bring up their children, and indeed anyone who looks below the surface may well be alarmed at the sullen spirit of dogged resolution that is taking hold of the young generation, particularly the educated ones. They are convinced of the hopelessness of appealing to the justice of England and they almost welcome any fresh act of arbitrary power, because it hammers the people together and makes them more resolved for the struggle that they look forward to' (J.X. Merriman to G. Smith, 1 July 1900, in Phyllis Lewsen (ed.) *Selections from the Correspondence of J.X. Merriman* (Cape Town: The Van Riebeeck Society, 1966), p.222).

ethnicity were still subsumed in an ideology of colonial nationalism. In 1900, this was clearly reflected in popular consciousness - and also the official ideology of such influential institutions as the Dutch Reformed Church.¹⁸ However, prominent DRC ministers were already taking an anti-imperialist stand. In December 1900 the whole of Cradock mourned the death of Queen Victoria, but in Cape Town the *Groote Kerk's* Ds Steytler inspired the fury of the pro-British press by declining to hold a memorial service.¹⁹

The *Zuid-Afrikaansche Vrouwen Federatie's* politics flowed from the older colonial nationalism and a post-war politics of reconciliation. These women accepted the framework of Empire and pursued an ideal of a (white) heterogeneous nation. The (bilingual) opening prayer for their first meeting asserted their commitment to South African identity, thanking God for creating 'ons volk' ['our people'] and asking him as 'women of South Africa' to 'bless our togetherness ...'²⁰

A central aim of the Federation was that responsible government be extended to the 'Sister Colonies'. English and Dutch versions of its constitution differed significantly. Very likely, this reflected the increased prominence of Dutch-Afrikaans women in the organisation. According to the English (and first) version, the ZAVF supported the creation of 'a free, united South Africa with just and equal rights for all, without distinction of race, class and creed' that would include the 'Sister Colonies'. The Dutch text omitted this ideal. New additions included the need to work for 'de kiezing van mannen van beginsel ... als leden der wetgevende lichaam' ['the election of men of principle ... as members of the legislative

18 South African Library, *SA Bound Pamphlets* 21(38), J. H. Hofmeyr et al, 'The Dutch Reformed Church and the Boers' (London: National Press Agency, nd c.1899). This war-time pamphlet states the position of 'the moderamen of the church and its Foreign Missions Committee and the Senior Congregation in Cape Town.'

19 Schoeman, *Only Anguish to Live Here*, p.161.

20 CA, A1953, Add2/1 (Documents pertaining to the South African Women's Federation). According to Lewis's *Women of South Africa*, a significant number of key ZAVF members were the daughters of, or married to, men who held high positions in the former ZAR administration. They were married to 'progressive' farmers, solicitors, politicians and church ministers. By 1913, a number of them shared a 'seminary' background. High school education in the Transvaal lagged behind the Cape and Orange Free State. But both Transvaal-born members and women who were originally from the Colony had been boarders at the Cape seminaries. Others were educated at the Eunice Dames Instituut in Bloemfontein, a DRC sponsored school that offered a similar education and where students could also qualify as teachers. By 1913, many ZACVV members were interested in mission support work. However, the Transvaal *Vrouwen Zending Bond* (Women's Missionary Society) had only been founded in 1905.

body']. But both versions ended with the respective salutations - 'God save the King!'/ 'God behoede den Koning!'.²¹

In contrast, Roos and Steytler's speeches showed a cultural nationalism that cast heterogeneous nationhood as a dire threat to the *volk's* continued existence. By 1906, the ZACVV's name was changed to the *Afrikaansche Christelike Vrouwe Vereeniging*, thereby giving formal expression to the organisation's ethnic character.²²

A meeting between the two organisations at the ZACVV's first congress in 1905, ostensibly to discuss amalgamation, revealed much ill-feeling between erstwhile comrades and highlighted ideological differences. According to the Federation's detailed version of the meeting ('After the prayer Mrs C. de V. asked to have the windows opened for fresh air ...') the formidable Mrs Roos

started an address of about an hour and a quarters duration. She told the meeting of what she had done for the Boers during the War how *I* neglected my house, *I* lived so to say in the streets, *I* packed clothes for the Boers etc. etc. She never mentioned Mrs C.C. Smuts, Miss Cissy van Reenen ... or any one else, it was all herself and only herself. It was a long harangue, with several inaccuracies which the Federation occasionally corrected...²³

The meeting erupted in mutual accusations and 'a great deal of bitterness'. But differences went much deeper than mere personal rivalry. Roos insisted that the interests of *kerk*, *volk* *en taal* could not be furthered with a heterogeneous membership. As another *Vereeniging* member explained, 'the Hollands Afrikaansche volk' ['Dutch Afrikaans *volk*'] was distinct from the heterogeneous 'Zuid-Afrikaansche volk' ['South African *volk*']. The Federation's stated aim to promote education for and by the *volk* could not convincingly be interpreted to mean promoting *taal* and *kerk*. A heterogeneous people would not support the language rights of the Dutch Afrikaners. Working for this ideal whilst led by an Englishwoman was unacceptable:

Mev. Le Roux (merkte) dat men door het stem van het volk niet de Holl. Afr. Volk konde verstaan daar het volk van Zuid Afr. uit verschillende nationaliteiten samengesteld is en dat het stem van dien gemengde volk toch niet voor de Holl. taal is. Maar hoe of dien regel ook uitgelegd mag worden het eene vernedering zou zyn

21 CA, A1953, Add2/1 (documents pertaining to the South African Women's Federation). The Dutch version also has clauses urging the promotion of 'gezonde opvoeding door de stem van het Volk voor het Volk' ['healthy education by the voice of the People for the People'].

22 Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p.148.

23 CA, A1953, A1/1/1/1 (Minutes of ACVV meetings), 1907. Original emphasis and punctuation. The exact dates of meetings were not always noted in the ACVV's minute books.

eene Holl. Afr. vrouw om voor de behoudenis van haar taal en kerk te werken onder de bescherming van eene Engelsche dame...²⁴

[Mrs Le Roux remarked that one could not mean by the voice of the people the Dutch-Afrikaans People, as the South African people consisted of various nationalities and this heterogeneous people did not support the Dutch language. But in whatever way this rule might be interpreted, it would be humiliating for a Dutch-Afrikaans woman to work for the preservation of her language and church under the guidance of an English lady...]

The *Vereeniging's* reception committee noted with 'verwondering' ['astonishment'] the unexpected presence of Mrs de Villiers, president of Cape Town's Federation. She had previously sent them a letter announcing her refusal to attend. Explaining why, she had suggested a broader definition of who counted as 'Afrikaansch' than the *Vereeniging* was prepared to accommodate:

Daar myne medeleden ofschoon echt Afrikaansch tot de Anglikaansche, Roomsche, Independenten en Presbyte-riaansche kerken behooren en u my uitdrukkelyk gezeg hebt dat geen leden van deze kerkgenootskappen aan de Vereeniging kan behooren, voel ik my niet vry uwe uit noodiging aan te nemen...²⁵

[As my fellow members, although genuinely Afrikaans, belong to the Anglican, Catholic, Independent and Presbyterian churches and as you have explicitly stated that no members of these denominations may belong to the *Vereeniging*, I do not feel free to accept your invitation...]

It was not coincidental that this tense meeting took place as *Het Volk* (The People) was launched in the Transvaal. The ZAVF's open commitment to 'partij-politiek' and *Het Volk* was well known and criticised by the *Bond* aligned press and the ZACVV.²⁶ At a meeting addressed by General Botha and attended by prominent Transvaal women, they were asked to win members for *Het Volk*. And at a Federation meeting in 1906 General Botha urged women to venture outside of linguistically-defined communities and apply their skills to the urgent business of welding the 'white nationalities' into a bilingual, white South African nation:

Als de vrouwen vorentoe komen om te helpen kunnen zij veel doen, ook in de politiek maar als de vrouw net in een groep blijft, trekt de man zich ook in die groep terug, want een man is maar lief voor een vrouw. Het ideaal is tot de grote samenwerking te komen. De vrouw moet helpen verwezenliken, dat in Zuid-Afrika

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ The *Afrikaner Bond* aligned *Zuid-Afrikaan* of 27 Dec. 1904 observed with some disapproval of the Federation that 'de politiek (Partij-politiek van den dag) in dese organisatie een prominente plaats inneemt' ['politics (Party-politics of the day) are prominent in this organisation']. Early in 1905, the ZAVF was addressed by General Botha and asked to support his party. (*De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 3 March 1905).

komt één groot natie, een tweetalig volk, dat elke blanke nationaliteit in zich opneemt...²⁷

[If the women came forward to help they could achieve a great deal, also in politics. But if women stay in one group only, men will also withdraw into the group, because after all men are fond of women. Our great ideal is co-operation. Women must help achieve this, so that *one* great nation comes into being in South Africa, a bilingual nation incorporating every white nationality...]

When the party won the 1907 election, a well-attended celebratory meeting in Stellenbosch included ZAVF members. Again, the need to build a united nation was stressed.²⁸

The ACVV maintained a feminine disinclination for politics, but was known to be aligned to the *Afrikaner Bond*.²⁹ But the women's ethnic nationalism could hardly be explained with reference to an organisation with no strong penchant for an exclusivist politics. However, in the years immediately following the war, an exclusive ethnic nationalism was developing amongst Afrikaans-Dutch academics and churchmen in the western Cape. This nationalism strictly emphasised language and religious creed, inextricably linked Afrikaner identity to Dutch/Afrikaans and the Protestantism of the 'Dutch' church. 'Het behoud ... het vorming van ons volkskarakter als Holl. sprekenden' ['The preservation ... the shaping of our national character as Dutch speakers']³⁰ meant promoting the language and religion. Loss of language meant Dutch-Afrikaans people lost to church and *volk*. Steytler, the minister who refused to honour Queen Victoria in 1900, was a prominent supporter of this view. The ACVV executive, several of whom belonged to the same Cape Town DRC circle, shared these ideals. Steytler (married to the ACVV's vice-president) was also a vocal supporter of the organisation in the press, and pivotal speaker when policy was explained to members.³¹

Negotiations between the ACVV and ZAVF came to a head in 1907, the year of Botha's election triumph in the Transvaal. Both organisations had been recruiting women from across South Africa; they met to discuss resultant friction and the possibility of unification. 'Verdeel de vrouwen en gij verdeel 'n natie' ['divide the women and you divide a nation']

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 22 Nov. 1906.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 March 1907.

²⁹ An editorial in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* of 6 Oct. 1904 linked the two organisations; so did the chairperson at the ZACVV's founding at Stellenbosch, reported in the same edition. A speaker at the ZACVV's first congress was J.H. Hofmeyr, leader of the *Afrikaner Bond* (CA, A1953, 3/2/1 (ACVV congress reports) 1905, p.9).

³⁰ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 'Derde Kongres der Afr. Chr. Vrouwen Vereniging', 11 April 1907.

³¹ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 'het standpunt van de ACVV toegejuicht', 7 Nov. 1907; 11 April 1907.

warned the ZAVF's Mrs Steyn.³² Difference cut too deep however for the granting of her 'vurige wensch' ['fervent wish'] that the meeting would help 'al de Zuid-Afrikaansche vrouwen aaneen te schakelen' ['all South African women to join together']. Of course, women from the Cape did not share quite the same wish - once again, the ACVV's restrictive membership prevented their reaching an agreement. The ZAVF accepted as members 'een ieder, van welke nationaliteit of geloof ook, mits zij Afrikaners van gevoelens waren' ['anyone, of whichever nationality or belief, providing they are Afrikaners of sentiment'].³³ In other words, everyone who shared the political ideal of a (white) South African nation was welcome, regardless of ethnic origin. Their Jewish and Catholic members - so the representatives explained - would never vote for the ACVV's restrictive rules. But this inclusive notion of 'Afrikaners of sentiment' was not acceptable to an ACVV leadership whose definition of 'Afrikaner' was circumscribed by language and religious persuasion. To avoid reaping the 'bittere vrucht van verdeeldheid' ['the bitter fruit of divisiveness'] the organisations finally chose separate regions. The ACVV was limited to the Cape, the ZAVF to the Transvaal and the Free State was left to a new organisation.

What did ordinary members make of all this? The ZAVF claimed that ever since that acrimonious 1905 meeting, members of the ZACVV had assured them 'of their entire disapproval of what took place on the 31 May 1905 in the side room of the Huguenot Memorial buildings'.³⁴ Whether this was true is difficult to gauge. At any rate, the Cape Town ZAVF soon folded while the *Vereeniging* expanded steadily. At the first congresses, language and membership rules were occasionally clarified at branches' request. 'Kunnen personen die het moeilijk vinden Hollandsch te spreken, maar zich nochtans verenigen met de beginselen der ACVV en begerig zijn met ons mede te werken, als leden toegelaten worden?' ['can persons who speak Dutch with difficulty but who identify with the ACVV's principles and want to participate become members?'] asked Loxton in 1906.³⁵

32 *De Goede Hoop*, Oct. 1907, pp.91-92.

33 *Ibid.*

34 CA, A1953, A1/1/1/1 (Minutes of ACVV meetings), 1905.

35 CA, A1953, 3/2/1 (ACVV congress reports), 1906, p.7.

3. The Philanthropic Work of the ACVV from 1904 to c.1917

From the first, the ZACVV itself identified work amongst *Arme Blanken* (Poor Whites) as one of its most pressing tasks. The context was hugely increased poverty, also amongst Dutch-Afrikaans whites, after the South African War. The need for philanthropic work in the context of post-war devastation was clearly an important motivation for the founding of the women's organisations (the ZACVV as well as the ZAVF). As Benedict Anderson has emphasised, nations are commonly 'imagined' as a community of 'deep, horizontal comradeship', regardless of 'the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each'.³⁶ But constructs of national identity also rely on notions of difference and exclusion.³⁷ If the women's organisations opposed each other on questions of religious affiliation and language, no one ever doubted the whiteness of the *volk*. Regardless of their culture or church affiliation, people with skins of darker hue were imagined as outsiders to this community. By definition, blacks had no claim on urgent help - in fact, they *were* the threat from which *arme blanken* must be rescued.

Working amongst the poor had also long been accepted as ideally suited to women. Now, Christian charity became fused with nationalist mission. As a DRC minister explained to the Stellenbosch branch in 1907,

Vraagt men: welken reden heeft de ACVV te bestaan? Zijn antwoord is: Omdat het volk't behoefte heeft aan de vereeniging. Het is geen hersenschim maar een feit, de vrouw is scherpzinnig en zeker van hart. Het scherpe oog ziet en het tedere hart voelt. Vooral in geval van de armen, kranken en gevallen kan een vrouw meer tot hulp zijn dan een man. Ons volk heeft behoeften aan hulp...³⁸

[If one asks, what reason does the ACVV have to exist? The [lit.his] answer is: because the *volk* has need of the organisation. It is no chimera but a fact that woman is keen-witted and sure of heart. Her keen eye sees and her tender heart feels. Especially as regards the poor, the sick and the fallen a woman can help more than a man. Our people have need of help...]

If the war's after-effects were not nearly as severe in the Cape as in the burnt and forcibly abandoned farm-lands of the Boer Republics, economic change and social dislocation also

36 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso Editions, 1983), p.15. Anderson employed the term 'imagined community' to emphasise the transcendence of visible, localised bonds of kinship or community. The nation is 'an imagined community ... imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (*ibid*).

37 Joanna de Groot, 'The Dialectics of Gender: Women, Men and Political Discourses in Iran c.1890-1930', *Gender and History* 5, 2 (1993), p.258.

38 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16 Nov. 1907, p.1907.

contributed to increased rural poverty and landlessness amongst Dutch-Afrikaans speakers. The expansion of market-oriented agriculture in the sheep-farming districts of the eastern Cape and the combined effects of fencing and rising land prices helped to crowd out many small farmers and landless *bywoners* or *trekboere*. Many struggling farmers and erstwhile shepherds left the more established Cape districts for cheaper land in the sparsely populated north-western region.³⁹ Many others moved to towns and villages as itinerant workers.

This was the context for welfare efforts of ACVV branches founded in towns and villages across the Cape *platteland*. At most ACVV meetings, membership fees were collected, fund-raising efforts planned, and the needs of the local poor discussed. Branches typically extended aid to a number of families or individuals for several years, usually in kind. In 1907, the Beaconsfield branch (close to Kimberley) gave 10s. to 'Wed[uwee] Morrison wiens huis en klederen de vorige week opgebrand werd' ['Widow Morrison whose house and clothes were burnt the previous week'].⁴⁰ However, the '½ lb. Thee, 1 kars, 1 doos vuurh[outjies]' ['½ lb. tea, 1 candle, 1 box matches'] that she received in 1910 was more representative of the branch's philanthropy.⁴¹

But some rural branches made more ambitious plans to deal with rural poverty. By 1908 Hopetown had addressed impoverished (white) women's need for employment by establishing a laundry. In 1907, Worcester decided to educate a young woman at the Huguenot Seminary 'om later zendingwerk onder onze verarmde en verachte blanken te doen' ['in order to do mission work amongst our impoverished and deprived whites']. An institution founded to train women missionaries for work amongst black 'heathens' was now utilised for rescue missions amongst the *volk's* poor whites.⁴² A year later, the branch also reported their efforts to remove 'our' impoverished whites from the town's location:

Door't onvermoeide werk van een komitee, daartoe aangesteld, is het ons gelukt onze arme blanken, die in de locatie tussen de gekleurde woonden, van daar te verwijderen en rond in het dorp in huurkamers te krijgen.⁴³

39 According to J.F.W. Grosskopf, the population of the northwestern Cape increased by 24 per cent, and the northern Cape by 59 per cent between 1904 and 1911 (*The Poor White Problem in South Africa: Report of the Carnegie Commission, Part I. Economic Report: Rural Impoverishment and Rural Exodus* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932), p.64).

40 CA, A1953, Add 1/2/3/1/1 (Beaconsfield), 15 May 1907.

41 *Ibid.*, 18 July 1910.

42 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16 Nov. 1907.

43 *Ibid.*, 3 Sept. 1908.

[through the tireless work of a committee, formed for this purpose, we managed to remove our poor whites who lived in the location amongst the coloureds and get them into hired rooms in the town.]

But as in the late nineteenth century, Dutch-Afrikaans speakers identified illiteracy and the need for education as a major component of the 'poor white problem'. ACVVs practising piecemeal philanthropy also typically tried to improve the schooling of poor Dutch-Afrikaans children. Farmers' children were often helped to advance beyond local farm schools and sent to boarding schools in town, or to industrial and agricultural schools further afield.⁴⁴

The ACVV was also preoccupied specifically with the need to provide education for girls. In 1910 Elizabeth Roos pointed out that while industrial schools for boys had been established, the educational needs of girls were being neglected:

Wij zijn zeer dankbaar voor wat er door middel van de industriele inrichtingen gedaan wordt om onze arme jongens in een positie te plaatsen op een eerlijke wijze voor zichzelf iets te verdienen; maar dit is niet genoeg, wij gevoelen hoe noodzakelijk het is, dat ook onze meisjes opgeleid zullen worden om werkzaam en nuttig te zijn.⁴⁵

[We are very thankful for what is being done through the industrial institutions to enable our boys to earn an honest living; but that is not enough, we believe it necessary that our girls should also be trained to be industrious and useful.]

Roos's plan was the establishment of a 'huishoudschool' ['housekeeping school'], an institution that would teach 'arme meisjes ... dat zij geschikte huismoeders zouden kunnen worden' ['poor girls ... that they could become competent house-mothers'].⁴⁶

The first *huishoudschool* was established in the western Cape town of Tulbagh in 1913; by 1920 a third would open its doors. Local branches now contributed to the education of girls through financial support for the schools and by sending girls from local poor white families to Tulbagh. Girls from very poor families in particular were sent to the *huishoudscholen*. Here they could be educated into good mothers and industrious workers. From the beginning the focus was on what was traditionally regarded as women's work around the home; this was clear from Roos's explanation of the institutions' purpose in the letter quoted earlier:

⁴⁴ *Die Huisgenoot*, May 1917, pp.23-26; CA, A1953, Add 1/5/5/1/1/1 (Keimoes), 5 Jan. 1918, 3 Feb. 1918, 3 April 1918; Add 1/12/5/1/1/1 (Strijdenburg), 7 Nov. 1920.

⁴⁵ *De Goede Hoop*, Feb. 1910, p.188.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

[wij hebben] een inrichting noodig waar de meisjes geleerd kunnen worden alles, wat tot het huishoudelijke behoort, zooals waschen, strijken, eten bereiden, naaldwerk, kleederen verstellen, en daarbij ook het nuttig besteden van geld...⁴⁷

[We need an institution where the girls are taught all that belongs to the household, such as washing, ironing, preparing food, needlework, alteration of clothes, and also how to manage money efficiently...]

But for the first fifteen years or so of the ACVV's existence, leadership's emphasis was as much on the need to promote cultural nationalism as on the provision of day-to-day help for the poor. While many rural branches would practice philanthropy in much the same way in 1918 (or even, for that matter, 1928) as in the earliest years of the organisation's existence, leading women involved in the ideological construction of nationalism responded to a changing political context. In fact, a full understanding of every aspect of the ACVV's work necessitates a more nuanced exploration of the gendered construction of Afrikaner identity.

4. Women Organising for the *Taal*

As Isabel Hofmeyr has convincingly argued, the 'fabrication of an Afrikaans language and literature' was central to the 'invention' of Afrikaner nationalism. Soon after the South African War, a handful of journalists, writers and DRC ministers began to promote Afrikaans as the language of the *volk*. Supporters for the use of written Afrikaans joined Preller's northern *Afrikaanse Taal Genootskap* from 1905, and the southern *Afrikaanse Taal Vereniging* from 1906.⁴⁸

But fashioning Afrikaans into a respectable, *algemeen beskaafde* ['standardised, civilised'] and professional language was no easy task. Those Dutch-Afrikaans intellectuals who perceived English to be a threat to the continued use of their own language were in fact

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Those who publicly indicated support for the ATG in the former republics included Smuts and Botha. However, class tensions also hindered its acceptance in the north. Isabel Hofmeyr argues in 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity, 1902-1924' (S. Trapido and S. Marks (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987)) that the initial response 'was disastrous as nobody wanted to touch an organisation dominated by Preller, an upstart clerk of dubious peasant background and his rather peculiar *outré* friend, Marais'. She suggests that in the south, 'where ATV members could reactivate allegiances and structures of the First Language movement', the response was better (p.105).

vigorously debating the future form of the *taal*. At the heart of the dispute was the need for a standardised written language that could hold its own against English.

While Gustav Preller of *De Volkstem* attempted to 'legitimate an Afrikaans language struggle', others insisted on the inherent superiority of Dutch.⁴⁹ But which 'Nederlandsch'? Some promoted the continued use of 'zuiver Nederlandsch' ['pure Dutch'], but from 1904 a strong contingent argued against the continued use of a language far removed from everyday speech, and advocated 'taalvereenvoudiging' - the introduction of simplified spelling and grammar.⁵⁰ Sympathetic newspapers like *De Zuid-Afrikaan* immediately and controversially adopted the new rules. In the western Cape, preference for a version of Dutch probably reflected the continued rejection by many well-to-do Dutch Afrikaners of Afrikaans as 'kombuistaal' ['kitchen language']. But supporters of the ATV, including prominent Cape Afrikaners, dismissed the product of *vereenvoudiging* as neither Dutch nor Afrikaans and as an effort to prevent Afrikaans from gaining ground.⁵¹

The ACVV assiduously avoided engagement with current disputes around which version of Dutch or Afrikaans the *volk* should read and write. Its continued use of unmodified (but sometimes ungrammatical) Dutch reflected the middle-class character and political caution of the organisation. Afrikaans began to gain the upper-hand in the language dispute from 1917. However, while some reports and letters in *Die Huisgenoot*'s ACVV pages now appeared in Afrikaans, official missives were still mostly in Dutch by the end of that decade.⁵²

From its first years, the ACVV was certainly active in promoting *volk en taal*. Executive members explained the need to popularise the history and language of the *volk* in the Dutch cultural journals and newspapers of the day. A number of branches clearly shared this concern. At the ACVV's first congress in 1905, Stellenbosch and Wellington wanted the use of Dutch during *huisgodsdienst* (family devotions) at boarding schools discussed; Paarl

49 Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words', pp.104-105.

50 The language rules issued by the *ZA Taalbond* in 1904 were in fact based on a simplified form of Dutch advocated in the Netherlands, where the use of High Dutch was also in some dispute.

51 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 13 Sept. 1904, 24 Jan. 1905, 7 Sept. 1905, 19 Sept 1905, 21 Sept. 1905, 5 March 1908, 30 June 1908; Zietsman, *Die Taal is Gans die Volk*, p.101.

52 While *Die Brandwag* (published in the Transvaal) promoted Afrikaans from its inception in 1910, *De Huisgenoot* (published in the Cape) only became *Die Huisgenoot* in 1917. Almost from its inception, *De Goede Hoop* (also from the Cape) negotiated a variety of linguistic registers - with some prose and poetry labeled 'in Afrikaans' or 'in de Vereenvoudigde schrijfwijze' ['in the Simplified grammar']. From 1917 the journal adopted Afrikaans as its official language.

asked that teachers should encourage boarders to speak Dutch. What, asked Stellenbosch, could be done 'om de leeslust bij ons volk op te wekken?' ['to encourage our people to read?'] Also concerned with the *volk*'s reading habits, the ACVV in Victoria West suggested the use of 'Hollandsche lectuur tegenover het buitensporig gebruik van "novels"' ['Dutch literature against the excessive use of (English) novels'] and asked that a circular be sent to mothers 'over onderricht en correspondentie in het Hollandsch' ['about teaching and correspondence in Dutch']. The Carnarvon branch wanted Dutch included in compulsory examinations for civil servants. Modder-rivier in the northern Cape asked to discuss the distribution of suitable history books amongst the *volk* 'ter aanwakkeren en respect voor onze nationaliteit' ['to stimulate and cultivate respect for our nationality']. Branches also sought to promote Dutch through 'recitatie' competitions, book prizes for schools and small lending libraries.⁵³

The ACVV's close association with Dutch-Afrikaans professionals threatened by the cultural dominance of English was reflected in public campaigns around the official status of Dutch. Its stated aversion to 'politics' did not exclude public campaigns around cultural matters. In 1906 an ACVV petition with over 2000 signatures boosted the *Zuid Afrikaansche Taalbond* and *Afrikaner Bond*'s demand that the status of Dutch in the civil service be reexamined. The select committee appointed subsequently heard evidence from Roos and Schonken.

However, nationalist men did not perceive Dutch-Afrikaans women's support for the *taal* as self-evident. In fact, educated women were frequently accused of favouring English. 'Voor het aanleren van de smaak voor't Engelsche lied waren ... de meisjescholen vooral verantwoordelik' ['The girls' schools have been especially responsible for cultivating the taste for English songs'], explained a *Zuid-Afrikaan* editorial promoting the new *Hollands-Afrikaanse* songbook in 1907.⁵⁴ ACVV leaders vigorously supported efforts to redefine identity in strict linguistic terms, but writing in Dutch was also a newly adopted practice for women educated at English boarding schools. 'Verstaan wij onze plicht in dezen? Lezen, schrijven en spreken wij onze taal meer dan vroeger?' ['Do we understand our duty in this matter? Are we reading, writing and speaking our language more than we used to?'] asked the Worcester president.⁵⁵ Magdalena Schonken was at the forefront of the ACVV's language campaign, but her Huguenot Seminary education apparently impaired her own use

53 CA, A1953, 1/1/1 (ACVV congress reports) 1905; *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 'Jaarverslag van de tak der ACVV te Worcester', 21 Sept. 1907; 'Kaaipstadse tak der ACVV', 19 Nov. 1907.

54 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 8 Feb. 1908.

55 *Ibid.*, 3 Sept. 1908.

of Dutch. In 1904, her student son corrected her use of English phrases and condescendingly encouraged her to practice her *Nederlandsch*. ('Laat Papa u een klein zakwoordenboekje kopen, met regels en opgave der geslachten ...'; 'Ik merk alreeds een vermindering van taalfouten in uw laatste schrijven' ['Let Papa buy you a little pocket dictionary, with rules and lists of gender'; 'I already notice fewer grammatical mistakes in your latest letter'].)⁵⁶

Had one HESSIE B. received similar correspondence, she would have been ready with a sharp retort - or so her letter to *De Goede Hoop* in Sept. 1903 suggested. She responded to accusations of women's preference for English by pointing out that while numerous Dutch publications existed for the 'uncouth sex', women and girls were neglected:

en dan hebben jullie mannen nog de vrijpostigheid om te klagen, dat wij meer in Engelsch dan in Hollandsch schrijven! Is dat *onze* schuld? Als mannen het monopolie van de pers hebben, hoe kunnen wij ons in de Hollandsche taal beoefenen? Of willen de mannen misschien hebben, dat wij zelve ons eigen orgaan moeten stichten? Nu, dat zou ook toch een schande voor jullie mannen zijn, die ons in zulke dingen behooren te geleiden en te helpen! De plaats van de vrouw is in het huis. Zij moet daar leren of regeeren, en niemand is gereeder om haar op deze waarheid oplettend te maken als de man. Als vrouwen uitgeefsters van kranten worden, dan zouden jullie mannen niet genoeg van de 'mannetjies vrouwen' kunnen praten. Neen, wat gedaan moet worden, is dit: sommige van onze voormannen moeten bijmalkaar komen en besluiten om uitsluitelijk voor de Afrikaansche vrouwelijke sekse een tijdschrift uit te geven, en zij moeten bekwame schrijfsters krijgen om geregeld bijdragen te leveren...⁵⁷

[and then you men have the guts to complain that we write in English rather than in Dutch. Is that *our* fault? If men have a monopoly of the press, how can we practise the Dutch language? Or do the men perhaps want us to found our own publication? Now, that would shame you men, who should lead and help us in such matters! The place of woman is at home. There she must learn or govern, and no one is quicker to tell her this than the man. Should women become the editors of papers, you men wouldn't stop talking about 'man-like women'. No, what must be done is this: some of our leading men must come together and decide to publish a magazine specifically for the Afrikaans female sex, and find able women writers to contribute regularly...]

5. The Changing Discourse of Maternal Duty

Clearly, discussions on women's role in promoting Dutch and Afrikaans was a regular feature in popular journals and newspapers of the day. At the heart of this concern with females' supposed rejection of Dutch and Afrikaans was the perception that mothers could crucially help preserve a language that rendered Afrikaners culturally distinct. As a writer to

⁵⁶ CA, A1953, Add 7/1, Theo Schonken to M. Schonken, 5 May 1904, 14 June 1904, 3 Nov. 1904.

⁵⁷ *De Goede Hoop*, Sept. 1903, p.16.

the *De Goede Hoop* explained in 1906, women's crucial role in their children's education made them pivotal to the preservation of language:

over de opleiding der kinders heeft de moeder meer invloed en macht dan de vader, en hierom spijt het mij te meer, dat zoo 'n menigte Afrikaansche meisjes en vrouwen niet genoeg wilskracht en nationale standvastigheid hebben, om de verzoeking, die de dwaze, verderfelijke, zoogenaamde mode biedt, te weerstaan.⁵⁸

[mothers have more influence and power over the education of their children than fathers, and for this reason I am all the more sorry that such numbers of Afrikaans girls and women lack the will and national resolve to resist the temptation of so-called fashionable ways.]

From its earliest years, the columns of the ACVV in *De Goede Hoop* also featured discussions on women's role. Although public debate about female duties as regards Afrikaans often had a strongly nationalist slant, discussion within the ACVV reflected more varied ideas. Officially, the ACVV affirmed that women's promotion of Dutch was crucial for its survival - and reminded a 'respected professor' of women's initiative in cultural politics:

Deze vereniging ... beaamt ten volle de werk door hem gegeven aan de vrouwen van Zuid Afrika, wat betreft het spreken en schrijven in de Hollandse taal, en neemt de vrijheid de geachte professor er op te wijzen, dat de ZAVV reeds in deze het 'voortouw' heeft opgenomen.⁵⁹

[This organisation ... fully accepts the work he has given to the women of South Africa, as regards speaking and writing in the Dutch language, and takes the liberty to remind the respected professor that the ZACVV has already taken the initiative in this matter.]

De Goede Hoop featured frequent missives from executive members telling *moeders* and *dochters* to work for *kerk, volk en taal*; this was also the central message of speeches by Roos and guest speakers at the congresses. But for the first four or five years after the launch of the ACVV, the ideas articulated on these pages reflected women's rootedness in

⁵⁸ *De Goede Hoop*, Feb. 1906, p.171. Women's role as the bearers of national culture and language was emphasised in various nationalist movements. Eleni Varikas provides an interesting example in 'Gender and National Identity in *fin de siècle* Greece' (*Gender and History* 5 (2) 1993). She discusses women's participation in the revival of nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century. In 'a contradictory process of differentiation' the Greek nation was constructed both against the backwardness of the Orient and the decadence of the West. Liberation from Ottoman rule combined with expansionist projects of a 'civilising mission' amongst the Balkan peoples. In this context, opportunities for women's education increased. Like Afrikaner women, Greek women were 'situated at the centre of national strategies' as the bearers of language. This involved a 'national crusade of school-teachers sent to the remotest parts of the Ottoman Empire to diffuse the mother tongue and its 'civilising' gifts' (pp.271-80).

⁵⁹ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 15 Feb. 1905 (Report on ACVV Cape Town branch resolution).

the religious world-view first articulated in the 1870s. At first, Christian duty overshadowed duty to the *volk*. Leading ACVV women were apt to emphasise women's loyalty to the church. Mrs Michau from Cradock, veteran of the war-time protests, reminded the newly established Colesberg branch 'op de plichten tegenover ons land, volk, kerk en vooral onze kerk' ['of duties towards our country, people, church and especially our church']. Mothers' task as Christians was also discussed with no reference at all to the *volk*. Thus letters and extracts on the ACVV pages in *De Goede Hoop* advised members on how to be good Christian mothers. A Cradock woman reminded fellow ACVV members that even the unborn baby assumed its mother's moral characteristics but made no mention of *volk* or nation:

Denken wij voor een oogenblik, hoedat het ongeboren wichtje reeds gebrandmerkt wordt met de karaktertrekken, de gewoonten en zeden der moeder, hoe betaamt het ons dan niet om met voorzichtigheid, met vreeze en beving dien eerepost te ontvangen om alzoo het hulpeloze, dat ons toevertrouwd is, op te brengen, op te bouwen tot een waardig beeldrager van Hem die het ons verleend heeft ...⁶⁰

[Let us think for a moment about how the unborn baby is already marked with the characteristics, the habits and morals of the mother. Is it then not proper that we should accept with care, fear and trepidation this post of honour; to thus raise the helpless ones entrusted to us, to make them into worthy carriers of the image of Him that have lent them to us ...]

That executive members espoused similar ideas is clear from their choice of stories and tracts for *De Goede Hoop*. Tales about 'de bitterste smart, die aan het moederhart blijft knagen' ['the most bitter grief that eats away at mothers' hearts'] warned women that, though pious and good themselves, neglect of their children's moral education might turn them into thieves and murderers. Evidently, leading ACVV members were promoting ideas about women popularised by mission journals in the late nineteenth century. This was hardly surprising. Many ACVV members belonged to the *Vrouwen Zending Bond*, and ideals of feminine piety first popularised from the 1870s still reached a Dutch-Afrikaans audience through mission journals. In fact, *De Wekker's* list of distributors - first published in 1910 - revealed an almost exclusively female readership.⁶¹

However, a meshing of religious and nationalist identity amongst middle-class Dutch-Afrikaans speakers was already taking place. At the ZACVV's first congress an ode

⁶⁰ *De Goede Hoop*, Oct. 1906, lecture at Cradock by ACVV member, pp.93-94. See also for example 'De invloed van de moeder op hare kinderen', Sept. 1905, p.66.

⁶¹ From 1904, the publication also had a female editor (see Chapter One, footnote 85). *De Wekker* still published stories of *biddende moeders* (praying mothers) and the power of *moederliefde* (motherly love). For example, 'Hij zal antwoorden Moeders Gebed', Aug. 1902, p.3; 'Moederliefde', Sept. 1908, p.4; 'Voor Moeders', Sept. 1908, p.4; 'Moeders gebed', Jan. 1910, p.1.

specially composed for the occasion called on women to preserve their cultural heritage and reminded them of their crucial task at home. The (male) poet celebrated women's calling in words that strongly echoed the older discourse of maternal duty, but blended in new nationalist elements:

Neen, Moeders, Laat Uw invloed schitt'ren
Als Nationaal Bezielend licht! ...
Met God omhoog en't hart van binnen
Zien w'onze Vrouwen als Heldinnen
Beschermend trouw ons huisaltaar.
Gij zult het onze kindren leeren:
Te vreezen slecht den Heer der Heeren,
Zij't kroost van held en martelaar.

De Moeders houden toch te koorden
Van de wieg af tot aan de graf ...
hun liefde, zorg, gebeden, woorden
Wer't kinderhart geheel nooit af ...
O Moeders! doet Uw invloed gelden
Het Afrikaner Volk tot nut
En kweekt ons Volk tot Christenhelden
In's rijken huis, in schaam'le hut ...⁶²

[No, Mothers, let your influence sparkle/ as Nationally Inspiring light! ... With God on high and from the heart/ We see our women heroines/ Faithfully protecting our house-altar./You shall teach our children this:/ To fear only the Lord of Lords/ offspring of heroes and martyrs ...

Mothers are the indeed the keepers/ of threads from cradle to the grave .../ their love, care, prayers, words/stay ever in the childish heart .../ O Mothers!/ make your influence felt/ serving the Afrikaner Volk/ nurture our Volk to Christian heroes/ In wealthy houses, humble huts ...]

The ACVV's self-conceived task of course, was to promote both 'Calvinist' religion and nationalist ideology. In fact, its columns show how ideas about women's role as articulated by Afrikaner nationalists built upon, and subtly transformed, the older, religious world-view that had shaped thinking about women's role in Dutch-Afrikaans communities from the 1870s. The promotion of *kerk, volk en taal* involved a crucial reshaping of gendered identity. Specifically, the new discourse reconstructed maternal duty - women were called upon to rear children for the community of the church, but also to build a *volk* defined by language. In 1907, the Worcester branch president and *predikantsvrouw* also explained the importance of women's educative work for the *volk* in words that strongly echoed, yet changed, the older religious discourse. As before, motherhood was idealised and women confined to the private sphere. But now, the importance of early instruction in the *moedertaal* was explained to 'moeders van een volk' ['mothers of a people']:

Wij leggen de eerste beginselen voor het toekomstig leven in het hart onze kinderen.
Hun eerste gebeden moeten zijn in de taal hunne moeders. Liefde voor hun kerk,

62 CA, 1953, 3/2/1 (ACVV congress reports) 1905.

taal, godsdienst en zeden moet het fundament zijn, waarop voor de toekomst gebouwd wordt ...

Grote mannen in de geschiedenis hebben dikwels erken, dat zij hun sukses in hun leven toe te schrijven had aan de gezegende invloed hunner moeders ... Goddank! Wij, de Afrikaanse volk, hebben ons moeders. Verstaan wij onze roeping ten volle zusters? Verstaan wij het allen? Het volk zal zijn wat de moeders het maken...⁶³

[We place the first principles for future living in the hearts of our children. Their first prayers must be in the language of their mothers. Love for their church, language, religion and customs must be the foundation on which one builds for the future.

Great men in history have often admitted that their success in life is due to the blessed influence of their mothers ... Thank God! We, the Afrikaans people, have our mothers. Do all of us fully understand our calling, sisters? Do we understand it? The *volk* will be what the mothers have made of it ...]

By 1910, discussions about children's education in the ACVV's pages in *De Goede Hoop* reflected a more thorough meshing of older, church-based ideals of motherhood with those belonging to ethnic nationalism. Letters and tracts that articulated women's educative role in religious terms alone virtually disappeared. For the ACVV, women's moral duty towards church and *volk* were often closely linked: 'Moeders, gij ziet wat er op onze schouders ligt. De toekomst, niet slechts van ons kind, maar van ons land, volk en kerk' ['Mothers, you see what lies on our shoulders. The future not only of our children, but of our country, people and church'].⁶⁴ As Magdalena Schonken explained:

Jaziet Lieve zusters, werden al onze kinderen zo van jongs af geleerd om voor hun volk, taal en kerk te arbeiden ... dan sullen zij, wanneer zij in onze plaatsen neemen, nuttige en standvastige mannen en vrouwen van beginsel zijn en wacht een schone toekomst van ons volk.⁶⁵

[You see dear sisters, if our children were taught from the first to work for their people, language and church ... then when they take our places they will be useful, steadfast, principled men and women, and a bright future awaits our people.]

The development of a discourse of maternal duty with both religious and nationalist overtones is therefore clearly apparent in the first few years after the South African War. However, Kruger has argued of the Transvaal-based SAVF during the same period that 'whereas in later years women would be predominantly portrayed as mothers, the word 'mother' was absent from the early SAVF discourse. Women were acknowledged as women' and ... never referred to as mothers'.⁶⁶ This was certainly not true of all speakers

⁶³ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 21 Sept. 1907.

⁶⁴ *De Goede Hoop*, Dec. 1912, p.149.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Aug. 1910, p.46.

⁶⁶ Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p.147.

at their congresses. In 1905 a DRC minister addressed ZAVF members as 'moeders van het volk' ['mothers of the people']; like his counterparts in the Cape, he blended an older religious discourse with nationalist notions of women's duty.⁶⁷ But the politicians who attended the same occasion addressed 'Afrikaanse vrouwen' ['Afrikaans women']. In fact, for several years after the war, Transvaal newspapers *Het Westen* and *Land en Volk* seldom referred to women, let alone their role as mothers. Why this difference? Very likely, the late nineteenth century discourse of maternal duty had itself been a phenomenon largely confined to the Cape. The Transvaal of the 1890s had only a few Dutch publications and a dominant English press. High school education for Dutch-Afrikaans whites had also followed some twenty years after the Colony. The religious discourse that idealised motherhood and facilitated a shift to nationalist notions of maternal duty was therefore probably not as widely available to Dutch-Afrikaans speakers of post-war Transvaal.⁶⁸ Moreover, Dutch print culture of the post-war years was disorganised and likely to be less influential than in the Cape, where well established newspapers and cultural journals were less affected by the war.⁶⁹

67 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 7 Dec. 1905 reported on a speech at the ZAVF's first congress in Pretoria by Ds van Broekhuizen. The speaker reminded women of their power over men 'and similarly over the *volk*, although this power is not "unlimited", even so on this power the future of the *volk* largely depends Woman's duty was to take care of her child's education; "give me the child", teach the Catholic, "and I have the man!" Let us ... keep the children for the *volk* Mothers of the *volk*! Show your children that they have a calling, that they belong to a Nation ...' (My translation).

68 No women's missionary societies existed in the Transvaal until 1905. Education also lagged behind, although a number of women were educated in Bloemfontein and the Colony (see footnote 20 above). Kruger does note that a limited number of ZAVF documents were studied; a more detailed study could still uncover more references to women as mothers.

69 Transvaal newspapers, closed down during the war, appeared sporadically for the next ten years or so. Pretoria's *Land en Volk* (the post-war mouthpiece of the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Party* and later *Het Volk*) was published from 1903 to 1907. *De Volkstem*, an important newspaper before the war, was published in 1905, then folded to be relaunched in 1914. Another important Transvaal publication was *Het Westen*, a newspaper published in Potchefstroom from 1905 to 1915 and reflecting the thought of the Reformed (the 'Gereformeerde' or 'dopper') church. No Dutch or Afrikaans cultural magazines were published before *Die Brandwag* was launched in 1910. Until this time, the Transvaal therefore had no equivalent to *De Goede Hoop*, published in Cape Town from 1904.

6. 'Moeders van het Volk' ('Mothers of the People') - the Construction of a Political Identity

Alongside this reconstruction of maternal duty went the construction of a new political identity for Dutch-Afrikaans women that rendered visible their work for the *volk*. At first, women were largely absent from the nation 'imagined' in emergent Dutch-Afrikaans print culture. Even so, that favourite occasion for praise of women, the obituary, showed an interesting shift in political and religious perceptions of motherhood from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. In the 1890s, a woman was occasionally remembered as 'eene eedele vrouw, eene moeder in Israel' ['an honourable woman, a mother in Israel'].⁷⁰ Whilst apparently identifying their own religious community with the Israelite *volk*, these isolated instances were not part of a clearly articulated ethnic nationalist discourse. In 1900 the protest meeting at Paarl inspired one woman to write in terms that blended religious and 'patriotic' sentiments. She told 'onze Afrikaansche moeders' ['our Afrikaans mothers'] that the very air their children breathed should be

zuiver patriotisch ... voedt hen op om hun volk, hunne taal, hun godsdienst lief te hebben. Laten ze zien aan moeder en vader dat ge leeft en voelt, ja u opoffert voor uw volk, dat ge den geest van Jeremia en Mozes, een Daniel, een Paulus hebt, die zamen met hun volk leden en voor hen baden ... Laten wij ... met onze daden toonen, dat we ware moeders in Israel zyn. En dan zullen onze kinderen door Gods Genade in staat gesteld worden eenmaal nuttige plaatsen in kerk, vaderland en maatschappy in te nemen ...⁷¹

[purely patriotic ... teach them to love their people, their language and religion. Let mother and father show them that you live and feel, yes sacrifice yourselves for your people, that you have the spirit of Jeremia and Moses, a Daniel, a Paul, who suffered and prayed together with their people ... let us` show with our deeds that we are mothers in Israel. And then our children will through God's Grace be able to assume useful places in church, fatherland and society ...]

By 1904 the phrase 'mother in Israel' was still being used in praise of women and, perhaps, gaining more explicitly nationalist overtones. A DRC minister's wife was remembered as

niet alleen een Christenzuster, maar een moeder in Israël ... Gij zijt gewis in deze tijd een voorwerp van gebed bij al Gods volk, die u kennen ook in onze pastorie, biduur en kerk...⁷²

[Not only a sister in Christ, but also a Mother in Israël You are certainly at this time the subject of prayer of all God's *volk*, who know you, and also of our parsonage, prayer-meeting and church...]

⁷⁰ *De Kerkbode*, 18 March 1892, p.102. Also 5 Oct. 1888, p.319.

⁷¹ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 21 Aug. 1900.

⁷² *De Vereeniging*, 13 July 1905, p.7.

Emily Hobhouse, the war-time champion of women interned in the concentration camps, and benefactress of a weaving factory for Afrikaans girls in Philippolis, was thus praised in 1905:

Miss Hobhouse is de naam waardig van Dorcas en een moeder in Israel, aangezien zij met die daad haar sympathi uitdrukt. Laat het Afrikaanse volk haar steeds hoger waarderen en respekteren...⁷³

[Miss Hobhouse is worthy of the name of Dorcas and Mother in Israel, because she has expressed her sympathy with this deed. May the Afrikaans *volk* always appreciate and respect her...]

In early speeches after the war, Dutch-Afrikaans politicians, editors and ministers of religion called upon 'onze Afrikaansche vrouwen', 'moeders en dochters van het Zuid-Afrikaansch volk' ['our Afrikaans women', mothers and daughters of the South African people'] or 'moeders van het volk' ['mothers of the people'].⁷⁴ But while such phrases punctuated speeches, sometimes with brief celebrations of women's war-time contribution, the popular culture promoted by nationalist men rarely rendered women visible as political subjects committed to their cause.

Efforts to reconstruct female political identity would in fact centre around women's role in the South African War. For the first five years or so after the war, most poems and stories in Dutch-Afrikaans magazines and newspapers celebrating war-time prowess were about men. (Late nineteenth century features on important figures in 'onze Geschiedenis' ['our History'] had also featured only male heroes). Only occasionally did a poem celebrate 'onz' eedle vrouwen-strijders' ['our noble women fighters'] - but emphasised exceptional philanthropic effort rather than ordinary women's war-time experiences.⁷⁵ *De Goede Hoop* of 1904 provided one exception. Its article on women's 'Groote Vlucht' ['Great Flight'] from Free State farms was prefaced by comment on the lack of writing about women's lot in the war: '(d)e heldedaden, door de mannen verricht in den pas geëindigden oorlog, zijn vermeld in proza en poezie; doch van't aandeel van de vrouwen in den worstelstrijd heeft men tot nog toe heel weinig in geschrifte gehoord' ['the heroic deeds performed by men in

⁷³ *De Goede Hoop*, 3 Aug. 1905. Obituaries that referred to 'eene oude moeder in Israel' in what seems to be a purely religious sense continued to appear. For example, *De Kerkbode*, 21 Jan. 1904, p.29; *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 8 Jan. 1907.

⁷⁴ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 27 Dec. 1904; 7 Dec. 1905.

⁷⁵ *De Goede Hoop* 'In memoriam, Mevrouw Marie Koopmans-De Wet', Sept. 1906, p.59; 'Marie Koopmans-de Wet', Jan. 1906, p.157. The poems remembered her philanthropic work and war-time support for the Republican cause.

the recently concluded war have been recorded in prose and poetry; but as yet one has seen very little writing about the part women played in the struggle for survival'.⁷⁶

This was certainly not for lack of women's voices. Between 1900 and 1908, a number of Dutch-Afrikaans women published their own accounts of war-time experiences.⁷⁷ (It is however not clear how many educated Dutch-Afrikaans speakers read these books and pamphlets - most were published in England and Holland.) As Lou-Marié Kruger suggests, 'the general message the books conveyed was both that Afrikaans women had suffered and endured much, and also that the role they had been playing during the war had been courageous and important'. Women explained that war was a 'unifying experience for Afrikaans people, and therefore it was worthwhile recording its history'.⁷⁸ Thus Neethling wrote to publicise the 'horror, the wickedness of war' but also to express a pan-South African Afrikaner nationalism - 'to declare that we, Afrikaners of the republics and the colonies from the Cape to the Zambesi, are today, more than we ever were before, ONE PEOPLE'.⁷⁹

76 *De Goede Hoop*, April 1904, p.187.

77 Books and pamphlets published before between 1900 and 1905 included the following: Emily Hobhouse, *The Brunt of the War and Where it Fell* (London: Methuen, 1902); Wilhelmina R. Vis, *Tien Maanden in een Vrouwenkamp. Het Leven en Lijden van een Boereengezin in Transvaal tijdens den Laatste Oorlog met Engeland* (Rotterdam: D.A. Daamen, 1902); J.A. De la Rey, *Mijne Omsweringen en Beproevingen gedurende den Oorlog* (Amsterdam: Hoveke and Wormser, nd). The English version was published as *A Woman's Wanderings and Trials during the Anglo-Boer War* (London: T Fischer Unwin, nd c.1903). The first book written about the war and published in South Africa was E. Neethling's *Should we Forget?* (Cape Town: HAUM, nd c.1902). Johanna Brandt's *Het Concentratie kamp van Irene* (Cape Town: HAUM, 1905) appeared next. Her *Die Kappiekommando of Boerevroue in Geheime Diens* was serialised in *Die Brandwag* between 1911 and 1913. An English version, *The Petticoat Commando* (London: Mills and Boon), appeared in 1913, the probable year of publication of the Afrikaans version by HAUM in Cape Town. No other books on this topic were published or reissued before 1913.

77 Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p.134.

78 Neethling's introductory remarks in *Should we Forget?* (p.1) expressed a 'woman's perspective' emphasising both suffering and assertiveness: 'The patriotism, the patience, the endurance of the women, has been wonderful. To many a one there was no loss, no hardship, no disappointment she feared so much as that her husband would disgrace his manhood and surrender. We know of a woman in a camp who had lost her only two little children and had suffered much; but when her husband came in, instead of welcoming him, she burst into tears, exclaiming, "Oh this is the hardest blow of all."' See Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', pp.134-40, for a more extensive discussion of the literature.

79 Neethling, *Should we Forget?*, p.128.

In 1907, a widely publicised letter from the former president M.T. Steyn marked the beginning of nationalist reconstruction of women's role in the war. Steyn called a national conference of all the major Afrikaner organisations and parties to launch a fund-raising campaign for 'een nationale vrouwenmonument ... een nationaal huldeblijk aan edele vrouwen en kinderen die gedurende de oorlog zoveel heb geleden ... een grafsteen ter herinnering aan de dierbare doden ...' ['a national women's monument ... a national tribute to the noble women and children who suffered so much during the war ... a tombstone in memory of dear ones who died ...']⁸⁰ Lou-Marié Kruger notes that decisions at the conference concerned not only 'women and their sufferings, but also the significance these sufferings would have for a potential nation. The minutes ... reflect a process of reinterpreting the sufferings as having been endured for nationalist reasons.'⁸¹ While complaints of public apathy suggest that the idea of a *vrouwenmonument* did not immediately find a popular reception in the Cape, the ACVV was certainly an early participant.

From 1908, nationalists began to identify the absence of female imagery from their constructions of popular culture as a problem that needed to be rectified. A verse from 'Die Oom' ['The Uncle'] in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* of 1908 urged readers to throw away their English songbooks and sing Afrikaans praises not only to generals and male politicians, but also to 'onze moeders':

Sing ons van Kruger
Steyn, Reitz en Brand,
En roem di helde van eige land.

Eer sulke manne,
Als 'Onse Jan'

Prijs onse moeders
Al wat jij kan ...⁸²

[Let's sing of Kruger,
Steyn, Reitz and Brand
honour the heroes of our own land

celebrate such men
As 'Onze Jan'

Praise our mothers
all you can ...]

⁸⁰ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 11 April 1907.

⁸¹ Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p.141.

⁸² *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 8 Feb. 1908.

The nationalist interpretation of women's war experience was further elaborated by the Afrikaans poet Totius (J.D. du Toit) in his collection *Bij die Monument* of 1908. 'Wie kan dit met droge ogen lesen?' ['who can read this with dry eyes?'] commented an editor about 'In die kamp', a poem about a mother's helpless witness to her child's starvation in a concentration camp.⁸³ With the launch in the Transvaal of an Afrikaans cultural magazine, *Die Brandwag*, the campaign for the *Vrouwenmonument*, together with sentimental images of mother and child as victims of war, were further promoted. *Die Brandwag* also serialised Johanna Brandt's *Die Kappiekommando* between 1911 and 1913. The inauguration of the monument in Bloemfontein was extensively covered in the Dutch-Afrikaans press and was hugely successful as a popular event. Representatives of the four women's organisations attended along with (according to the newspapers) 15 000 to 20 000 people from all over the country (see plate 8).

Kruger has argued that although 'the symbolism of women's suffering was ... appropriated for the Afrikaner nationalist cause' during the campaign for the *Vrouwenmonument*, 'this was not yet done wholly in terms of a mothering discourse'. In *Rachel*, published shortly before the unveiling of the monument, Totius referred to a 'mother of Israel'.⁸⁴ But while speeches made on *Vrouedag* (Women's Day) referred to the idea of mother of the nation, speakers 'emphasised women, rather than mothers'. 'We do not yet ... find a distinctive *volksmoeder* discourse or even a special stress on the idea of mothering in the proceedings at the monument. The emphasis was rather on national sentiment or national unity ...'⁸⁵ Transvaal and Free State political leaders made few references to women as mothers at a time when a discourse of maternal duty had already acquired clear nationalist overtones in the Cape. Clearly, the gendered construction of Afrikaner nationalist identity, and specifically the development of a *volksmoeder* discourse, was not a coherent process. This is all the more interesting when ACVV women's ideas about their public and political role are considered.

83 Totius, *Bij die Monument* (Potchefstroom: AH Koomans, 1908); *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 28 April 1908. Compare 'Di moeder en haar kind' (*Het Gereformeerde Maandblad*, 2 Feb. 1909) with 'In de kamp'. The former celebrates mutual love between mother and child in sentimental terms. So does Totius, but his subject is a mother's helpless witness to her child's death from starvation. I also draw on Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p.141.

84 Totius, *Rachel* (Potchefstroom: A H Koomans, 1913).

85 Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p.143.

7. *Volksmoeders en Mannelike Vrouwens* (Volksmoeders and Manlike Women): The ACVV and Women's Suffrage, 1907 - 1914

Ek hou van 'n vrou wat wil stemreg hê
Wat aan mans elke keer die waarheid sê
Wat uit in die kou
Vergaderings hou
En gin manskens vergun om haar woord te weerlê ...
Vir my die vrou van durf en daad
Wat mans en hul heerskappy versmaad
Haar leuse en stryd:
"Onafhanklikheid!"
En 'n trap van haar voet vir die huwelikstaat⁸⁶
[I like a woman who wants the vote
Who always tells men like it is
who out in the cold
meetings hold
never lets any man contradict her word
For me the woman courageous and brave
Who men and their rule do hate
Her motto and cause:
"Independence!"
And a kick from her foot for the married state]

What would the leaders and ordinary members of the ACVV, paging through *De Goede Hoop* in 1909 to find their organisation's regular column, have made of 'Dolfie's' satirical 'Lied van die Stemreg Vroue' ['Song of the Suffragettes']? ⁸⁷

From its earliest days, the ACVV acted as a self-proclaimed force for 'voervaderlijke' ['forefatherly'] values and a moral guardian of Dutch-Afrikaans society. If the organisation's name emphasised its Afrikaans character, it also indicated that this was a specifically *Christian* organisation; the constitution likewise specified that members should

⁸⁶ *De Goede Hoop*, Nov. 1909, p.101.

⁸⁷ The poem is adapted from Jan F.E. Cellier's 'Ek Hou van 'n Man wat sy Man kan staan', a patriotic poem probably well-known amongst nationalists at the time. The first verse celebrated a patriotic masculinity: 'Ek hou van 'n man wat sy man kan staan;/Ek hou van 'n arm wat 'n slag kan slaan/'n oog wat nie wijk,/wat 'n bars kan kijk/En 'n wil wat so vas soos 'n klipsteen staan ['I like man who stands on his own/I like an arm that can strike a blow/an eye that does not yield/ but outstares his foe/and a will that stands as fast as stone']. 'Dolfie' was well aware that Cellier's poem also celebrated men who honoured their language and mothers who taught their children the *taal*. This is the last verse: 'Ek hou van 'n man wat sy moeder eer/in die taal uit haar vrome mond geleer/En die bastergeslag/in sij siel verag/Wat haar verstotend, hulself kleinere' ['I like a man who honours his mother/in the language he learnt from her pious mouth/and despises in his soul/ the 'mongrel' generation/who reject her and belittle themselves'].

support the Dutch Reformed Church's values and practices. Moreover, the annual tabling of resolutions that reaffirmed women's commitment to the morality of *volk en kerk* at branch meetings, and their subsequent discussion at congress, was integral to the practice of the ACVV.

Early resolutions reflected a strong identification with the notions of maternal piety and moral responsibility for the family first promoted in church publications from the late nineteenth century. Sometimes this blended with an assumption of moral guardianship over the *volk*. In 1906, women from New Bethesda in the Karoo warned that the 'Afrikaanse volk' neglected family devotions, and suggested that the main task of the ACVV was to revitalise this 'gezegende voorvaderlijke gewoonte' ['blessed forefatherly habit']. Members from Worcester in the western Cape urged 'vooral de vrouw en moeder' ['especially the woman and mother'] to watch over 'dat Heiligdom, de huiselijken kring' ['that Hallowed institution, the family circle'] and warned that such evils as playing cards and dancing affected the *volk*. In 1909, women from Cape Town and villages across the Cape resolved that 'wij als moeders' ['we as mothers'] had to instill love of the church in children and promote biblical studies at school. A problem that merited regular discussion was 'sondagreizen' or the deplorable practice of timing school holidays so that people travelled on Sundays. Another threat was Catholic schools who lured eight year olds to their strange practises. In 1912, a Karoo branch also pointed out the need to prevent children from reading harmful literature. The previous year, calls for censorship had been extended to include the phenomenon of the bioscope.⁸⁸

Women from New Bethesda also asked what could be done to instill love for their parents and parental home in 'onze jonge dochters' ['our daughters']. The latter concern may well have been related to questions of parental authority; a number of resolutions were about the apparent threat to the morals of the *volk* posed by new modes of dress and use of public space. A danger that emerged in the early 1910s and would long feature at ACVV congresses was 'gemengde baden' ['mixed bathing'], or both sexes bathing at the same public locale. In 1906, the executive already warned against 'een zeer verontrustend verschijnsel onder ons vrouwelijke geslacht, te weten, rooken en dobbelen' ['a very worrying tendency amongst our female sex, namely, smoking and gambling']. From 1914, branches also called upon 'moeders en dochters' to reject 'de hedendaagse onbetaamelijke klederdracht' ['today's improper clothing'].⁸⁹

88 CA, A1953, 3/2/1 (ACVV congress reports), 1905-1914.

89 *Ibid.*, 1906-1914.

Resolutions highlighting the problems that unemployment, begging, and lack of skills amongst *arme blanken* posed for the *volk* were more common than calls for racial segregation. However, in 1910 the Alexandria ACVV supported legislation 'ter verhinderen van vermenging van blanken met gekleurden' ['to prevent the mixing of whites with coloureds']. Train journeys to congress probably inspired suggestions that the railway service introduce 'vervoer van kleurlinge met speciale wagens' ['transport of coloureds in special wagons']. By 1914, Worcester also argued that black ('gekleurde') patients should be treated by black nurses.⁹⁰

But while ACVV practice affirmed women's moral guardianship and adherence to 'tradition', the public proclamation of their concerns was integral to such rituals.⁹¹ In the first few years after the war, the ACVV established for itself a comfortable and respected public niche in Dutch-Afrikaans society. If some women bitterly complained that their men tried to silence them now that the war was over, the ACVV's public efforts to further the interests of the *volk* was not likewise challenged.⁹² But the new organisation was hardly perceived as a firebrand by Dutch newspapers. Small wonder, when addresses by Roos were framed by the prayers and speeches of eminent men:

Oproeping der Presidente van het Eerste Kongres gehouden te Kaapstad, 29 Mei 1905 met de openingsrede van Ds. D.S. Botha; Ode, door den heer C.W.H. van der Post, toespraak van den edele heer J.H. Hofmeyr. Sluitingswoord van Ds. J.P. van Heerden.⁹³

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ The *beschrijwingspunten* sent in for discussion and the proceedings of every congress were published in Dutch newspapers.

⁹² Post-war backlash against women who claimed new roles during times of upheaval certainly occurred in the Transvaal and Natal. In 1903, the DRC's official publication for the Transvaal carried an article 'Mogen Vrouwen in het openbaar Bidden?' ['May Women pray in Public?'] This question apparently divided the author's congregation in Heidelberg - certain (male) members were refusing to attend prayer-meetings together with women, even threatening to leave the church. The writer argued that while women could not interpret texts, their right to pray in public must be respected. His words prompted an angry and bitter letter from some 'Zusters' in Vrijheid (Natal):

'One of my reasons for writing is a feeling of disappointment in the outcome of the bitter time of war and suffering that we experienced. That such divisions can now exist between those calling themselves christians. Today such people find women's prayer offensive, but in the days of war and exile, when thousands of sisters came together to publicly implore and pray for our oppressed *volk*, then no one took offense. Even across the ocean voices reached us: "pray for us". Oh, how freely we could then pray!' (*De Vereeniging*, 23 March 1904, p.10, my translation). The article that prompted this response was published on 18 Nov. 1903, pp.7-8. The issue is also raised in *De Koningsbode*, Aug. 1906, p.76.)

⁹³ CA, A1953, 3/2/1 (ACVV congress reports), 1905.

[Call to action of the President of the First Congress held at Cape Town, 29 May 1905 with the opening speech by Ds D.S. Botha; Ode, by the honourable Mr C.W.H. van der Post, speech by the honourable Sir J.H. Hofmeyr. Closing words by Ds J.P. van Heerden.]

When ACVV leaders invited members of the Dutch Reformed Church synod and their wives to join them for lectures on the role of women, *De Zuid-Afrikaan* reported approvingly: '(d)e leden van de Vereeniging traden niet zelf in het publiek op; bescheiden vroegen ze verschillende leraren om voor haar het woord te voeren ...' ['members of the society did not themselves speak in public; they modestly asked several ministers to speak on their behalf ...']⁹⁴ From the beginning, male speakers routinely reminded women of their duties 'als vrouw, als moeder, als Christin' ['as wife, as mother, as Christian']. At times, speeches included muted warnings against women moving beyond their allotted sphere. Female action ('door woord, daad en voorbeeld' ['through word, deed and example']) was necessary in these times, but without abandoning their 'roeping als huismoeder' ['calling of house-mother'].⁹⁵

But such uneasy acceptance of public action by women was soon replaced by more overt expressions of alarm. When the ACVV was first founded, votes for women was a non-issue: instead, the 1904 general election featured occasional letters on black enfranchisement.⁹⁶ In contrast, women's right to vote was such a burning issue by 1908 that election day merited a special advertisement for Nectar Tea:

Aan de Niet-Kiesgerechtigde Vrouwen van Zuid-Afrika. Maakt u niet moeilijk Over de Politiek en't STEMRECHT VOOR VROUWEN zolang gij de VRIJHEID van keuze hebt betreffende uw huishoudelijke behoeften. In het toepassen van dat KIESRECHT, is het uitzoekt van de meest geschikte drank van zeer groot belang. Doet uw plicht voor uw huishouden en STEM EENPARIG voor NECTAR THEE.⁹⁷

[To the Voteless Women of South Africa. Do not worry yourselves over Politics and SUFFRAGE FOR WOMEN as long as you have FREEDOM of choice regarding your domestic needs. When exercising THE RIGHT TO VOTE, choosing the most appropriate drink is very important. Do your duty for your household and VOTE UNANIMOUSLY for NECTAR TEA.]

94 As reported in *De Goede Hoop*, Nov. 1906, p.16.

95 CA, A1953, 3/2/1, Report of 1905 Congress, p.14. DRC minister P.J. van Heerden was the speaker.

96 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 26 July 1904.

97 *Ibid.*, 2 April 1908.

Sporadic reports of militant 'suffragette' action in Britain had made little impact in South Africa. But in 1907, the newly launched Cape Town branch of the Women's Enfranchisement League successfully used debate in parliament to thrust women's suffrage into the centre of public discussion. In the Dutch-Afrikaans press, measured editorials, heated exchanges in the letter columns, lengthy arguments from local debating societies and witty poems all dissected the issue.⁹⁸ Parliamentary debate had already made clear that male opinion did not necessarily follow ethnic divisions. While Cronwright-Schreiner claimed Botha and Smuts as fellow supporters for women's suffrage, John X. Merriman contemptuously dismissed this attempt to 'emasculate the electorate'. Some *bondsmanne* argued for suffrage as 'a right, not a privilege'; others insisted that 'home was the place destined for woman' and that enfranchising women would 'upset the order of things.'⁹⁹

Most male writers to the *De Zuid-Afrikaan* shared an antipathy towards *vrouwen-stemrecht*, and appealed to religion and tradition to support their views. As one Wellington correspondent exclaimed:

men vergeet dat de Bijbel, die als levensregel behoort gevolgd te worden, van vrouwen stemrecht niets af weet, maar integendeel duidelijk veroordeelt. Een ding is weer duidelijk geworden, de wereld gaat naar het einde, want men wordt hoe langer hoe droller in zijn dwaze ijver, ja, een ijver zonder verstand en nagedachte. Denk eens, de vrouw moet uit haar positie gerukt word, en om het land te help regeren o tempera o mores! Het wordt hoog tijd om tot de oude beproefde paden terug te keren, of ten minste daarnaar te vragen.¹⁰⁰

[people forget that the Bible, which provides the laws according to which we should live, knows nothing about women's suffrage but instead clearly condemns it. Clearly the world is coming to an end, because people are becoming more crazy in their foolish pursuits, yes, mindless and thoughtless pursuits. Just think, woman must be torn from her position, and this to help rule the country o tempera o mores! It is time to return to the old ways, or at least to demand that this happens.]

98 *De Zuid-Afrikaan* reported on the activities of pro-suffrage organisations. For example, 'Vrouwenstemrecht Liga', 1 Oct. 1908; 'Internationaal Kongres voor Vrouwekiesrecht', 16 July 1908. Alarmist articles on the effect of granting suffrage included 'Hoe Vrouwen regeren in Finland', 9 May 1908; Melt Brink's satirical play, 'O die muizen! of Het stemrecht voor vrouwen' was favourably reviewed in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* of 24 Sept. 1908 and *De Goede Hoop* of Oct. 1908, p.74. Anti-suffrage articles taken over from the foreign press included 'Marie Corelli's oordeel over de suffragisten', 10 Jan. 1907.

99 Cape of Good Hope, Debates in the House of Assembly (Cape Town: Government Printers, 1907), 4 July 1907, pp.95-8. Also Aug. 19, 1908, pp.553-8.

100 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, letter from 'O.C. Wellington', 13 July 1907. Similar arguments still appeared the following year. For example, 'Vrouwenstemrecht', 27 June 1908; 'Vrouwenstemrecht', 4 June 1908.

Of the several women who sent letters to western Cape publications, a minority wrote in favour of women's suffrage. One writer to *De Zuid-Afrikaan* pointed to the changing economic position of women who no longer automatically married at a certain age but entered the labour market together with men and worked hard for low wages. The struggle for survival 'moet even hard en nog harder word gestreden door de vrouw, en de maatschappij, met al haar plichten en eisen, doet zich even sterk gelden tegenover haar' ['must be waged as hard, and still harder by woman, and society, with all its duties and demands, puts as much pressure on her']. It was thus that

de vrouwen medezeggenschap eisen in de verrichtingen van de staat. Zij staan in de meeste gevallen in de maatschappij op precies dezelfde voet als de man, en het is daarom, dat zij dezelfde rechten eisen ... wat vasstaat, is ... [dat] het rad van de tijd nu eenmaal niet teruggezet kan worden, daarom zal het ook ondoenlijk blijken om op de duur aan de vrouwen haar politieke rechten te onthouden.¹⁰¹

[women demand an equal say in matters of state. In most cases their position in society is the same as that of men, and it is thus that they demand the same rights ... what is certain is ... that the wheel of time cannot be turned back, and therefore it will become clear that it is in the long run impossible to deny women their rights.]

Another vigorous supporter emphasised that her biblical heroines had acted as judges and generals, but that their work 'voor land en volk' ['for country and people'] did not imply neglect of wifely and maternal duties.¹⁰² 'An unmarried woman' provided more tentative support for suffrage in *De Goede Hoop*'s lively (and male-dominated) debate on the subject:

Ik stem in met 'Een Vrouw en Moeder,' dat de Bijbel tegen de zitting van vrouwen in politieke vergaderingen is, maar de Bijbel zegt niet dat een vrouw geen invloed mag laten gelden bij de stille stembus.¹⁰³

[I agree with 'A Wife and Mother', that the Bible is against women taking a seat in political bodies. But the Bible does not say that woman may not allow her influence count at the silent ballot-box.]

More often, women agreed that *onbijbelse suffragettes* (unbiblical suffragettes) threatened 'het huislik leven' ['domestic life'].¹⁰⁴ One Rachel Booysen explained that 'het is niet de gezindheid van de Afrikaanse vrouw om publiek in de politiek op te treden; wij gaan liever een lekker baksel boerbeschuit bakken of nemen ons handwerk op' ['it is not the nature of the Afrikaans woman to publicly participate in politics; we'd rather bake a nice batch of

101 *Ibid.*, 22 Sept. 1908.

102 *Ibid.*, letter from H.S.S. Hurdus, 3 March 1908. Also 18 Feb. 1908; 7 April 1908.

103 *De Goede Hoop*, 'Een Ongehuwde Vrouw', Oct. 1908, p.74.

104 These were favourite phrases in the debate. See for example *De Goede Hoop*, March 1909, p.194.

rusks or take up our needle work'].¹⁰⁵ Some women voiced their opposition in nationalist phraseology. A *platteland* woman explained that she, usually too 'old fashion' (sic) to write to newspapers, felt encouraged by the example of other 'eenvoudige Afrikaanse vrouwen' ['ordinary Afrikaans women'] who publicly supported the old ways. She warned that once women moved beyond their sphere they would want complete equality. Moreover, too many meetings would prevent mothers from nurturing Christian and 'national' feelings in their children:

Hebben onze geleerde mannen dan nooit gelezen hoe een Franse staatsman eens zeide dat er in Frankrijk gebrek aan moeders was? Wij vrouwen, zijn meestal eergierig, wij zullen niet slechts bij stemrecht laten, maar als wij stemrecht krijgen, zullen wij in alles met de mannen gelijk willen staan, en mijns inziens worden er al reeds te veel vergaderingen en bezigheden voor vrouwen buitenhuis gehouden, in welke tijd wanneer wij die bezigheden bijwonen, wij niet alleen de huisgodsdienst voor ons zelve verwaarlozen, maar onze kinderen onder meiden of die van de hoge lui onder uitlandse 'nurses', en wat niet al, moeten laten, waardoor de godsdienst en het nationaal gevoel der kinderen verstikt wordt ...¹⁰⁶

[Have our learned men never read that a French statesman once said that France had a shortage of mothers? We women are mostly ambitious, we would not leave it at the vote, but when we have the right to vote, we would want to be equal to men in all things. And I think that there are already too many meetings and activities held for women away from home, and when we attend these activities, not only do we neglect family devotions for ourselves, but we have to leave our children with [black] servants or those of the well-to-do with foreign nurses, and I don't know what else, so that the religious and national sentiments of children are stifled ...]

A group of women from Graaff-Reinet in the Karoo reserved special praise for Merriman's anti-suffrage stand and emphasised the importance of woman's maternal and domestic duties for 'natie, staat en kerk' ['nation, state and church']:

'The woman's world is her home'. De moeder die deze aanmerking in haar ware betekenis opvatten kan, zal erkennen, dat indien zij maar slechts getrouw wil wezen aan haar roeping en plichten zij haar stem voor recht van vrouw, zoon en dochter in haar 'eigen huis' krachtiger en ernstiger kan gebruiken, dan luidkeels schreeuwen bij stembus, of op de vloeren van't parlamentshuis, en alzo stilswijgend zal haar 'stemrecht' helpen, om op te bouwen de grootheid en sterkte van onze natie, staat en Kerk ...¹⁰⁷

['The woman's world is her home'. The mother who understands the true meaning of this saying will realise that, if only she stays true to her calling and duties, she can use her vote/voice for the rights of woman, son and daughter in her 'own home' more powerfully and earnestly than to scream at the polling booth, or in parliament.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Oct. 1908, p.74.

¹⁰⁶ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 'Een Afrikaanse vrouw die bang is voor al die nieuwigheid', 20 June 1907.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 'Eenige Vrouwen uit het distrikt Graaff-Reinet', 1 Aug 1907. In Afrikaans, the words for 'voice' and 'vote' are the same.

Thus by remaining silent her 'right to vote' will help to build the greatness and strength of our nation, state and Church ...]

This intense interest expressed in the Dutch-Afrikaans press revealed an unprecedented level of concern with women's changing role in society. Indeed, new public concern that the separate spheres of femininity and masculinity were being challenged went beyond specific opposition to suffrage. The spectre of the 'New Woman' crystallised a broader concern with changing gender roles.¹⁰⁸

Educated and working women were also a source of concern for Dutch-Afrikaans men. A letter in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* of 1908 lamented that few men chose to become teachers, and that so many women were trained in the profession:

In andere landen hebben de vrouwen het beheer van bijna alles in handen. Waarom werpen wij onze paarlen voor de zwijnen en begraven onze talenten in een zweetdoek onder de aarde? Op intellektueel gebied staat de gewone man even hoog als de gewone vrouw.¹⁰⁹

[In other countries the women control almost everything. Why cast our pearls to the swines and bury our talents? Intellectually, the average man is as capable as the average woman.]

A correspondent to *De Goede Hoop* in 1908 spelt out male fears in 'de eeu der vrouw' ['the century of woman']. Woman's demands had reached unprecedented levels, and she was now man's

geduchte teenstander ... Over eenigen tijd zal er geen vak, geen beroep meer zijn, dat ook niet door de vrouw zal uitgeoefend worden. Aan de universiteiten tellen we de vrouwelijke studenten bij hoopjes. Doch ook van de minder prettige en gevaarlijke baantjes is de man zich niet meer zeker ... 't Is dan ook met angst, dat door sommigen de toekomst wordt tegemoet gezien. Maatschappelijke wanorde zal hiervan het gevolg zijn, wanneer de vrouw naast den man een gelijke plaats zal inneemen.¹¹⁰

[formidable opponent ... Soon, there will be no subject, no profession not also practiced by woman. At the university we count women students in their dozens. Even of less enjoyable and more dangerous professions men can no longer be sure ...

108 No gender specific figures for school students are available until the late 1910s. In 1891, 1 069 'european' men and 3148 women in the Cape colony were 'ministering to education' (see Chapter One, footnote 44 for earlier statistics). According to the 1904 census, women teachers numbered 4864 in the Cape Colony (as against 1393 men). In other professions men dominated. In the 'literature' category for whites, women made up 22 per cent, and the 12 female 'practioners of law' (one was black) counted less than one per cent of the total. By 1911, the latter ratio was 1740 to 28 (ten years later the legal profession had 247 women in the Cape, 750 in the Union). The census count also showed that 5 742 teachers far still outnumbered the men, who notched 32 per cent. 37 per cent of South African professionals in 'literature' were women. A decade later 7 089 women taught in the Cape (13 357 in the Union). As in 1904, male teachers still made up 28 per cent of the total.

109 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 'Waarom meer Onderwijzeressen dan Onderwijzers', 27 June 1908.

110 *De Goede Hoop*, May 1908, p.254.

It is therefore also with fear that some await the future. Social anarchy will be the result when woman takes an equal place next to man.]

The debate about women's entry into the public sphere also extended beyond the suffrage issue. An essay in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* by Worcester's *Christelike Jongelings Vereniging* (Christian Youth Society) asked whether women should be allowed to speak in public - and answered 'met nadruk neen en nogmaals neen' ['emphatically no and yet again no']. Men and women had separate tasks and different natures - for women, this dictated quiet devotion to the family. Tampering with their original destinies would result in an undesirable blurring of male and female characteristics.

De man die zijn werk vaarwel zegt en dat van de vrouw doet, verliest (met eerbied gezegd) zijn mannelijkheid, en de vrouw die haar deel verruilt of prijsgeeft voor dat van de man, overschreidt (met eerbied gezegd) haar vrouwelijkheid en daarbenevens ook eerbied aan haar verschuldigd!¹¹¹

[The man who bids his work farewell and does woman's work, loses (with respect) his masculinity, and the woman who exchanges or gives up her part for that of the man, oversteps her ennobling destiny and loses (with respect) her femininity and moreover also the respect due to her ...]

As in the late nineteenth century, changing gender roles prompted churchmen to reiterate that female subordination was divinely ordained. An article in *Het Gereformeerd Maandblad* on woman's role in the congregation explained the necessity for understanding biblical dictates 'in een tijd levende, waarin de vrouw zich al meer en meer op elk gebied des levens wil laten gelden' ['during times, when women want to assert themselves more and more in every area of life']. A detailed discussion of 'vaderlijke heerschappij' ['paternal authority'] inextricably linked divine and male authority. The unequivocal message to Dutch-Afrikaans women was that worshipping God entailed obedience to men. In the divinely appointed order, that meant silence in public.¹¹² And as the writer warned,

111 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 12 Dec. 1908. My discussion is indebted to Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), pp.3-4.

112 'God is the Head of Christ, Christ the Head of man, and man the head of woman. By the word 'head' Paul means: a sharing of life and inequality in that sharing. Such is the relation between man and woman, between Christ and the man, and ... also the relation between God and Christ. Thus the relation between man and woman mirrors a higher relation ... man does not stand between her and God, but she is subject to man "in God" - in Him she loves and helps man' (*Het Gereformeerd Maandblad*, 'De Vrouw in de Gemeente', Dec. 1907, pp.184-7, my translation).

The writer drew the particularly conservative conclusion that women were only allowed to speak out when possessed by divine spirit. Others argued that women could pray in public but drew the line at theological interpretation. The magazine was published in Stellenbosch as a 'Godsdienstig en Maatschappelijk Tijdschrift vir Zuid-Afrika'.

De scheppings geschiedenis ... blijft ... het beginsel van den maatschappelijken staat. De betrekking tusschen God en Christus, Christus en den man, en man en vrouw is nog niet veranderd ... die gronden [blijven] van kracht vir ons en vir alle tijden.¹¹³

[The story of creation ... remains ... the ordering principle of society. The relationship between God and Christ, Christ and man, man and woman has not yet been changed ... these principles apply to us and for all times.]

The speeches made by the churchmen annually invited to the ACVV congress also reflected alarm at the actions of 'new women'. By 1907, it was no longer enough to celebrate motherhood and women's domestic destiny. Ds Steytler first enumerated those activities *not* expected of women working for *volk, kerk en taal*:

Daartoe behoeft gij geen leraren of advokaten of doktoren of feministen of suffragisten te zijn - geen schreeuwers of luidruchtigen of platforms te bestijgen - geen leden van het parlement te worden of u te mengen in de ruwe strijd van een elektie, hetzij voor een lid van de stadsraad of parlement - geen ouderling of diakenambten en werkzaamheden, waartoe God de vrouw zekerlik niet heeft bestemd. Maar door de stille invloed, en juist daarom zo krachtig, die gij uitoefend op de huiselike kring...¹¹⁴

[To that end you need be no teachers or advocates or doctors or feminists or suffragettes - no ranters or loud-mouths or getting onto platforms - no becoming members of parliament or mixing with the rough strife of elections, whether for parliament or city council - no church elder or deacon or activities, for which God certainly did not destine woman. But through the quiet influence, and precisely thus so powerful, that you exercise at home...]

In similar fashion, another DRC minister addressing the Wellington branch rejoiced that ACVV women were '(g)een *suffragetten* ... geen propagandamaaksters op publieke platvorm ... geen zogenaamde moderne vrouwen, die er voor ijveren hen op onverstandige wijze de rechten van de man te onderkruipen' ['no *suffragettes* ... no propagandists on public platforms ... no so-called modern women, who irresponsibly work towards undercutting the rights of men'].¹¹⁵ In 1909, a DRC speaker pointedly addressed ACVV members 'als moeders, niet als burgeressen' ['as mothers, not as citizens'].¹¹⁶

¹¹³ This article was perhaps tellingly misrepresented by a correspondent to *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, who recommended it as a piece about 'de taalkwestie en het stemrecht der vrouwen' ['the language question and women's suffrage'] - issues never directly addressed. (*Het Gereformeerde Maandblad*, Dec. 1907, pp.184-7. See also 'De Eigelike Roeping der Vrouw', *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 21 Jan. 1908).

¹¹⁴ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 'Derde Kongres der Afrikaansche Christelike Vrouwen Vereniging', 11 April 1907.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 'ACVV rede van ds DG Malan', 14 Feb. 1907.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15 April 1909. A more literal translation would be 'not as citizenesses'. See Chapter Four - the Nasionale Vroue Party (National Women's Party) later founded a journal, *Die Burgeres*.

The launch of the *Vrouwenmonument* campaign and heightened interest in the construction of a political identity for Dutch-Afrikaans women thus coincided with a new anxiety about gender roles.¹¹⁷ Clearly, Afrikaner nationalists no longer constructed ideals of femininity on uncontested terrain. But the response of churchmen was not only to issue warnings about possible transgressions. From 1910, their addresses to ACVV congresses presented Christianity as a liberating force - but maintained the usual emphasis on female domesticity and motherhood. 'Hoe heeft de Heer de vrouw niet geëerd!' ['how highly the Lord honoured woman!'] exclaimed a *predikant* in 1910.

Is het een wonder dat onder volkeren waar Zijn leer wordt aangenomen, waar Hij gekroond wordt tot koning, de vrouw een gans andere plaats inneemt dan onder de heidense volkeren? Is het een wonder dat in ons land onder ons volk zulke vereniging gevonden word als [de VZB en ACVV]? De leden waarvan vrouwen zijn gedrieff door liefde tot de meester van Maria ... Bij het kruis op Golgotha vinden wij de vrouwen, zijn vriendinnen ... Geen wonder dat in Christenlande de Maria-geslacht nog zoveel lief heeft, nog zoveel uitricht...¹¹⁸

[Is it surprising that amongst peoples who accept His teaching, where He is crowned king, women attain an entirely different position than amongst heathen peoples? Is it surprising that in our country under our *volk* such organisations as the Women's Missionary Society and the ACVV are found? The women who belong to these are driven by Mary's love for the master ... At the cross of Golgotha we find women, his friends ... No wonder that in Christian countries Mary's sex has so much love, achieves so much...]

Addresses by churchmen also reflected an entirely new attempt to present a biblical history that showed women acting in attractively powerful, yet appropriately conservative roles. 'De Heere Jesus en Zijn apostelen hadden geen onderscheid tussen de man en de vrouw gemaakt, maar ze op gelijke voet gesteld' ['The Lord Jesus and his disciples made no

117 In 'The Dialectics of Gender: Women, Men and Political Discourses in Iran', de Groot provides complex and interesting material for comparison. De Groot examines the gender dialectics of 'non-european' nationalist responses in Asia and Africa to the ethnicised, competitive and racialised European nationalisms of the late nineteenth century. In the context of Iranian, Turkish, Moroccan, Indian and Egyptian inter-war political movements, issues of 'nation', 'religion' and 'gender' became politically charged. While de Groot acknowledges the activities women took on their own behalf, she examines 'male construction' and the ways in which gender was constructed as a vital element in male-dominated politics. 'The woman question' became an item on the political agendas of nationalists; in fact gender was central to 'the very articulation of projects of reform, nationalism, state power and social change'. Political projects were 'shaped by reference to gender issues, to women, and to sex and gender imagery'. These were 'symbols and signifiers of national identity, social progress or cultural authenticity'. For example, unveiling was advocated as a token of 'social progress and public good' by some (male) Iranian nationalists, and seen as a threat to accepted social identities that involved state intervention in approved popular moral and religious practice by others. Such issues as 'the education of women, their appropriate roles as productive workers, as educators of "citizens" ... as guardians of social and moral values' became part of discourses of national and social progress and emancipation (pp. 257-64).

118 CA, A1953, 3/2/1 (ACVV congress reports), 1910, p.7.

distinction between man and woman, but set them on an equal footing'] explained a speaker in 1914:

Gedurende Zijn wandelingen op de aarde speelde de vrouwen een voornamende rol De kerk had echter verzuimd in loop van tijd om van de diensten van de vrouw gebruik te maken Maar er was één gebied waar de vrouw de eerste plaats innam en dat was't huisgezin daarom wenste hij meer bepaald te spreken...¹¹⁹

[During His wandering on earth women played an important role The church however as time passed failed to make use of women's services But there was one area where woman played the most important role and that was the family, and he wished to speak more specifically about this...]

How did the ACVV respond to this context of anxiety about female transgression beyond accepted boundaries? From 1907, the organisation carefully positioned itself, and justified its actions, against those of the *stemregvrouens* (suffragettes). Male opponents of women's suffrage first pointed with satisfaction to the silent, therefore consenting female majority. But very soon, the ACVV could be cited as proof that Afrikaans women did not want the vote.¹²⁰ When pro-suffrage parliamentarians pointed to Schonken and Roos as living proof that women should not be excluded from politics, they disregarded the ACVV's own public stand.¹²¹ Thus at congress in 1907, Elizabeth Roos dismissed the suffrage movement as foreign to Afrikaans women - who wanted no more rights or freedom or power. They could achieve great things

zonder ons op het terrein van de 'New Women' te begeven, of ook zonder ons te mengen in de nieuwe beweging, tans ook onder ons op touw gezet, namelijk te vechten voor meer vrouwenrechten. Ik hoop, dat ik hier spreek uit aller mond, wanneer ik beweer, dat wy als Afrikaanse vrouwen nog nimmer gevoeld hebben, dat wy aan banden zyn gelegd, of immer gesnakt hebben naar meer vryheid en macht.¹²²

[without entering the terrain of the 'New Women', and without mixing with the new movement, now also initiated here [lit. amongst us], namely the fight for more women's rights. I hope that I speak for everyone when I say that we as Afrikaans

119 CA, A1953, 3/2/1, 1914, 'De Waarde der Vrouw', p.1. For other attempts to provide biblical role models, see the reports of the congresses in 1910 and 1912.

120 For example, 'Een Huisvader' [lit. 'House-father'] commended Aliwal-Noord's ACVV for their proposed resolution that the organisation should seek to influence Parliament against women's suffrage (*De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 15 April 1909). 'Ik ben blij dat de ACVV, als lichaam, niets met de suffragette-beweging te doen wil hebben ...' ['I am pleased that the ACVV, as an organisation, does not want anything to do with the suffragettes ...'] wrote another male correspondent to *De Goede Hoop* (Sept. 1909, p.66).

121 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 25 July 1908; 30 July 1908.

122 CA, A1953, 3/2/1 (ACVV congress reports) 1907, p.5.

women have never yet felt that we are restricted, and have never yearned for more freedom or power.]

Ordinary members apparently supported this stand. At the 1909 congress, women from rural Aliwal-Noord proposed a resolution that the ACVV should influence parliament to oppose women's suffrage. Perhaps more telling was the decision not to discuss this at congress 'daar de ACVV zich niet met politiek bemoei' ['as the ACVV does not meddle with politics'].¹²³ Roos was not the only leading ACVV woman to take a public stand on the suffrage issue. In 1910, the president of a *platteland* branch also emphasised that the ACVV did not campaign for the vote, and that its work for the *volk* embodied a modesty and submissiveness appropriate to the female sex:

[De heeren werken niet alleen] voor land en volk. Wij willen hen ook helpen, niet door stemrecht of gelijke rechten te vragen, maar zoo stilweg, aan de hand van onzen Bijbel die zegt, dat de vrouw moet zijn 'kuisch, matig, den man onderdanig, kinderen liefhebben en het huis bewaren'.¹²⁴

[The men do not work on their own for country and people. We want to help them, not by asking for the vote or for equal rights, but quietly, in view of our Bible that says, that woman must be 'chaste, restrained, obedient to her husband, love children and preserve the home'.]

If men were at pains to demarcate female territory, Roos's speeches at ACVV congresses and 'zusterlijke brieven' ['sisterly letters'] in *De Goede Hoop* also copiously explained the role of women in church and *volk*. In her 1910 address she stressed that these were times when the female sex increasingly wanted to stand 'op een en hetzelfde platform ... met de mans. Ja, sommigen openbaren zelfs een sterke begeerte om de man voorbij te streven' ['on the same platform ... with the men. Yes, some even reveal a strong desire to outdo men']. Understanding woman's true destiny was more important than ever. Modern education threatened to eradicate the dividing line between girls and boys. A new unhappiness, boredom with domestic life and desire for freedom, was apparent in many girls. Mothers had to rectify this by teaching their daughters that their destiny was 'een gans andere' ['totally different'] from their brothers'. They had to point out the dangers of striving for equality. Otherwise

hebben wij over enige jaren een aantal vrouwen, die zich niet langer in eigen huis en aan eigen haard gelukkig gevoelen. Zij zullen naar dingen streven die hen voor het huishoudelijke geheel ongeschikt maken, en zullen op die wijze het hoogste geluk dat een ware Christenvrouw en moeder hier op aarde bereid is, moeten missen.

[in a few years we will have a number of women, who are no longer happy in their own home. They will hanker after things that make them completely unsuitable for

123 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 15 April 1909; CA, DRC, V21, 1/1/2 (handwritten report of the fourth congress of the ACVV), vol. 2, p.14.

124 *De Goede Hoop*, Aug. 1909, p.44.

domestic life, and thus they will lose the highest happiness destined for a Christian woman and mother here on earth.]

This was also the context for Roos's conviction that the education of poor girls should specifically involve training for domestic tasks. The gender-specific education promoted by the ACVV was formulated by women with strong ideas about women's domestic role. Ensuring the survival of the *volk* meant working

om de toekomstige moeders onder onze armen te redden uit de onkunde, waarin zij tans leven, en hun de gelegenheid geven om de talenten, die er ook in hen gelegd zijn, te ontwikkelen, om zo in staat gesteld te worden eenmaal in eigen huis die ereplaats in te nemen, door de Heer, voor iedere Christenvrouw bestemd, hetzij rijk of arm is ...¹²⁵

[to rescue the future mothers amongst our poor from the ignorance in which they live at present, and give them the opportunity to develop the talents that they too were given, so that they will be able to take the place of honour the Lord has destined for every Christian woman, whether rich or poor, in their own homes.]

As in the nineteenth century discourse of maternal duty, and like her male contemporaries in the church, Roos presented woman's true destiny as God-given and glorious - a task that would satisfy all spiritual needs, a realm where women could wield a moral power that extended beyond the confines of home:

Dit huis, dit liefelik huis, is de sfeer der werkzaamheid en plichtsbetrachting van de vrouw ... Zusters! Kunnen wij ons een heerliker arbeidsveld voorstellen ...? De plaats door de Heer voor de vrouw bestemd [is] een eervolle en gewichtige. Haar huis is een kleine rijk, waarin zij geroepen wordt een drievoudig ambt te bekleden: dat van koningin, profetes en priesteres. De rechtegeaarde Christenvrouw voert met alle nederigheid, zachtmoedigheid en zelfopofferende liefde, heerschappij in haar huis ...

[Home, lovely home, is the sphere of work and duty of woman ... Sisters! Could we imagine ourselves a more glorious sphere of action ...? The place that the Lord has destined for woman is very honourable and important. Her house is a small realm, where she is called to hold a three-fold office: that of queen, prophetess and priestess. The right-minded Christian woman rules her home with humility, gentleness and self-sacrificing love ...]

Clearly, few ACVV members would have identified with the *stemregvrouens* satirised by 'Dolfie'. These women reviled in the Afrikaans press gathered 'uit in die kou' ['out in the cold'], while the ACVV's meetings were held within the relatively comfortable confines of male dominated Afrikaner nationalism. But while the organisation distanced itself from suffragettes and affirmed its support for male leadership at home and in nationalist politics, it also justified its actions against those who believed that women should not act in public at all. In the early years of the ACVV's existence, Roos was acutely aware that the ACVV was moving onto new terrain - and this especially when it held public meetings. But her defence

125 CA, A1953, 3/2/1 (ACVV congress reports), 1910.

in 1906 against critics who objected to the ACVV's congresses held no fundamental challenge:

Ons werk, als vereniging, keuren zij goed, maar vergaderingen als deze keuren zij ten sterkste af. Want de vrouw, zo beweren zij volgens hun opvatting van de Bijbel, wordt geroepen haar werk in de stilte te doen, zonder dat zij door de buitenwereld gezien of ook gehoord wordt. Toen iemand eens met mij sprak in die geest, was mijn antwoord: Ons vereniging werd niet gesticht met de doel om kongressen te houden, maar dat de behoefte aan zulke bijeenkomsten geboren werd uit de aard van ons werk, en toch, laat mij hier maar meteen uitspreken, hoop ik, dat het spoedig blijken zal dat het niet meer nodig is jaarlijks bijeen te komen.¹²⁶

[Our work as an organisation they approve of, but they oppose meetings in the strongest terms. Because women, so they claim according to their understanding of the Bible, are called to do their work in silence, without being seen and also without being heard by the outside world. When someone once spoke to me in this spirit, my answer was this: Our organisation was not founded with the purpose to hold congresses, but the need for such gatherings was born out of the nature of our work. And yet, let me be honest with you, I hope that it will soon become clear that it is no longer necessary to have annual meetings.]

And yet, the ACVV was claiming a legitimate place for women in public. While ACVV women carefully distanced themselves from movements that rejected male authority, they were still challenging conservative notions of women's role. A picture in *De Goede Hoop* of imposing Margaretha de Beer (plate 6), the ACVV's treasurer in 1909, was accompanied by an inscription that expressed pride in her assertive support for the cause and ability as public speaker, yet emphasised that she was feminine not feminist:

Een ernstige nationalist in woord en daad; een vrouw die voor niets terugdeinst, waar het de belangen van haar Taal, Natie of Kerk geldt. Gedurende de oorlog werd zij gekozen als een van de woordvoersters der grote vrouwen-vergaderingen ... en zij kwijt zich uitstekend van de taak. Met dat alles is zij een echt vrouwelijke vrouw, en heeft geen sympathie met de suffragettebeweging.¹²⁷

[A committed nationalist in word and deed; a woman who recoils at nothing when the interests of her Language, Nation or Church are at stake. During the war she was

126 *Ibid.*, 1906.

127 *De Goede Hoop*, July 1909. The ACVV's relative conservatism contrasts interestingly with the stance taken by female supporters of nationalist movements elsewhere. In 'Gender and National Identity in *fin de siècle* Greece' Varikas discusses the work of feminist nationalists. From the late nineteenth century, these women (most of whom belonged to the professional middle-class and urban petit-bourgeoisie) campaigned for equal educational and professional opportunities as well as, to a lesser extent, political rights. They drew on the language of nationalism to ground the relevance of women's public action in 'national interests'. The Greek feminist press asserted gender equality 'as necessary condition for the fulfilling of national destinies'. Turn of the century Greek feminism sought to reevaluate the past so as to 'redress male-centred perceptions of women in history', and put forward 'alternative human values whose historical bearers were women'. Instead of defining themselves against the New Woman, they identified themselves as such, and created a 'female collective memory' that placed women at the centre of Greek national history (pp.272-5).

chosen to be one of the speakers at the great gatherings of women ... and she performed her task excellently. Moreover, she is a truly feminine woman, and has no sympathy with the suffragette movement.]

But the publication of this picture also shows a greater acceptance of female assertiveness by nationalist men. Some six years after the war, the early, qualified praise of the ACVV (as a new force for *Volk en Kerk*, commendably silent at their own meetings) was supplanted by responses more accepting of female assertiveness for the *volk*. As *De Goede Hoop* explained to a correspondent who wrote a letter critical of 'mannelike vrouwen' ['mannish women']:

Wat de schrijfster afkeurt, is eigenlijk niet mannelijkheid, maar moedigheid - juist een eigenschap, die hij moet waarderen. We zouden de brief evenwel hebben opgenomen, ware die niet zo saai.¹²⁸

[What the writer disapproves of, is really not mannishness, but courage - precisely a characteristic that he should appreciate. We would still have published the letter, were it not so boring.]

Women who acted assertively were thus not necessarily transgressing the accepted boundaries of femininity. Nationalists - men as well as women - were redefining the boundaries of appropriate female behaviour.

In 1914, parliamentary debate on women's suffrage prompted another extensive speech by Roos on the ACVV and 'de moderne vrouwen beweging' ['the modern women's movement']. As in 1910, Roos again emphasised that woman's place was at home and subservient to man (teach your daughters respect for their brothers, and that father is 'hoofd in zijn huis, word door allen geëerbiedigt en geacht, en een erenplaats boven allen toegekend' ['head of the house, respected by all, given the place of honour above everyone']). However, she was more emphatic than in 1906 about the balance between old and new exemplified by the ACVV. According to Roos, the 'oude moeders' ['old mothers'] of the past were religious women who piously looked after their children and their homes. 'Buiten hun eigen huis werd hun stem nooit gehoord. Met politieke zaken bemoeiden zij zich niet' ['Their voices were never heard outside their homes. They never meddled in political matters'].¹²⁹ This devotion to domesticity was what the 'nuwerwetse vrouw' ['newfangled woman'] who strove for freedom and independence rejected as slavery. But while Afrikaans women knew that the price of freedom was too high and valued the ways of their fore-mothers, they also knew that times had changed. Roos argued that the pressures of

¹²⁸ *De Goede Hoop*, July 1909, p.1. In the original Dutch, the pronouns are mixed so that it is not entirely clear whether the writer was in fact male.

¹²⁹ CA, A1953, 3/2/1 (ACVV congress reports), 1914.

modern times had forced the Afrikaans women to depart from some of the ways of their apolitical and silent mothers:

Wij zullen allen gevoelen, dat, hoewel wij de leefwijze van onze vrome moeders hoogachten en waarderen, wij het toch moeten erkennen, dat de omstandigheden van onze tijd het ons onmogelijk maken bij het oude ons neer te leggen; en hoewel wij al het goede van het oude tijden willen blijven behouden en nawandelen, worden wij ook geroepen, naar de toestand van onze tijd onze aandacht en krachten te wijden aan de behoeften die er buiten de wanden van ons eigen huis bestaan; dit kunnen en moeten wij doen, zonder nalaten en verontachtzamen van onze eigen huiselijke plichten. Het is dan ook aan de bestaande behoeften toe te schrijven dat wij ons reeds elf jaar geleden gedrongen gevoelden een vereniging als de ACVV stichten. Wij hebben gevoeld dat tijden en omstandigheden niet gebonden kunnen worden door banden van gewoonten; en daarom is het ook onze vrouwen, de leden van onze ACVV ... tans meer op de voorgrond treden.¹³⁰

[All of us would agree that, although we respect and value the way of life of our pious mothers we must admit that present circumstances prevent us from resigning ourselves to the old ways. Although we would like to keep hold of and emulate what is good from the past, present circumstances also call upon us to devote our attention and energy to needs that exist outside of the walls of our own homes. This we can and must do, without neglecting and ignoring our own duties at home. It is also because of these present needs that, eleven years ago already, we felt pressed to found the ACVV. We felt that times and circumstances could not be held back by the bonds of habit; and therefore our women, the members of the ACVV ... are also currently more on the foreground.]

But this was, of course, a limited departure from tradition, in no way meant to challenge male power. Like some of her male contemporaries, Roos warned that modern trends could force men into subordinate roles - 'en wat wordt dan van het huiselik leven ...' ['and what would then become of domestic life ...']¹³¹

So the ACVV publicly supported *vaderlijke heerschappij* (paternal authority) whilst opposing its more conservative adherents. Roos and her colleagues never even made the 'fond' but derisive jokes about men that the ZAVF included in the minutes they published

130 *Ibid.* In 'Gender, Community and Identity' (p.154) Kruger discusses similar developments in the Transvaal, although the SAVF's attitude towards 'political' involvement followed a somewhat different trajectory. In 1908, Annie Botha also distanced herself from militant suffragettes but insisted that women should be politically involved: 'if we leave everything which looks like politics from our agenda then it seems to me that our organisation will become nothing more and nothing less than a charitable society. I think our organisation has more in mind than that. Our endeavours often hang together with political questions and, without it being necessary to become vociferous suffragettes, I think we should not limit our activities, we should not hesitate to also pay attention to that and to discuss such matters' (Kruger's translation from the original Dutch). This policy was followed until 1916, when the SAVF announced that it was leaving 'die politiek' in favour of a focus on social welfare.

131 CA, A1953, 3/2/1 (ACVV congress reports), 1914.

in the official Transvaal DRC journal.¹³² The ACVV's practical dealings with the Dutch Reformed Church was also a significant indicator of the extent to which ACVV women followed their publicly expressed maxims. In a church where women's voices were still only heard inside the church when hymns were sung, (male) elders were shown proper deference. The ACVV's selection of texts on woman's role supported the status quo by stressing - yet again - that women's all-important task was at home.¹³³ Branches were also careful to demonstrate respect to male dignitaries - from 1906, ministers were 'honorary' members. Meetings to discuss founding an ACVV were often presided over by church fathers, and women were encouraged to start new branches 'in overleg met den plaatselijke leraar en zijn echtgenote' ['in consultation with the local minister and his spouse'].¹³⁴

Even so, like many charitable organisations elsewhere, the ACVV was beginning to provide the skills and confidence that would draw women 'into an ever-widening sphere of public responsibilities'.¹³⁵ When confident townswomen travelled the countryside, they provided new role models for women on the *platteland* and helped to 'broaden the activities of what constituted appropriate activities for women'.¹³⁶ As the ACVV secretary from a village in the eastern Cape reported after a visit from Roos, '(a)lmal was verwonder om 'n vrouw so gemakkelijk 'n groot vergadering te hoor toespreek; en ik denk, die werk van ons vrouwe word nou meer verstaan en gewaardeer' ['everyone wondered to see a woman address a large meeting with such ease; and I think, the work of us women are now more understood and appreciated'].¹³⁷

132 A discussion about whether or not the starting time of a bazaar should appear on a fly-leaf included the following exchange: 'Een ander spreekster merkt op, dat men 'n man ('n onnozel wezen') niet zodanig duidelijk moet uitleggen. Ja, vindt een andere: hij is enigsins soos 'n kaffer, als jij hem baje bedui, raak hij deurmekaar' ['Another speaker remarked that you shouldn't explain much to a man (a foolish creature). Yes, said another: he is like a kaffir, if you explain too much, he gets confused']. *De Vereeniging*, 15 July 1909, p.25.

133 *De Goede Hoop*, July 1912, pp.21-2; 1 Oct. 1914, pp.91-2.

134 *Ibid.*, Oct. 1906, p.92; June 1914, p.286.

135 Cathleen D. McCarthy, 'Parallel Power Structures: Women and the Voluntary Sphere', in C.D. McCarthy (ed.), *Lady Bountiful Revisited. Women, Philanthropy and Power* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p.6.

136 Anne Firor Scott, 'Women's Voluntary Associations: from Charity to Reform' in *Lady Bountiful Revisited. Women, Philanthropy and Power*, pp.48-9.

137 *De Huisgenoot*, June 1917, p.54.

Moreover, a crucial aspect of the ACVV's organisation tended to get lost behind Roos's eloquently conservative speeches: subservience to men did not extend to matters of finance and policy. Unlike its predecessor the *Vrouwen Zending Bond* (and like its sister organisations in other provinces) the ACVV had no formal links to the Dutch Reformed Church. In the 1890s, Roos and Steytler had worked on welfare projects run by women but headed (and claimed) by men. Now, branches were expected to ask their *predikant* to occasionally attend their meetings with a word of encouragement.¹³⁸

But collecting and administrating funds, formulating and implementing policy - this was done independently of churchmen. Of course, not only brothers of the church, but also husbands at home were excluded from the dominion that women were creating for themselves in a society that afforded wives very few chances to make their own decisions about financial and property matters.¹³⁹ Some branches did involve men in key supportive roles, but in voluntary and subordinate capacities.¹⁴⁰

All ACVV members were by no means happy with this. In 1910 delegates from Franschhoek tabled a question for discussion: '(z)al het niet goed zyn dat de ACVV ook onder bescherming van onse Synode gesteld worde, soals thans de geval is [met de Vrouwen Zending Bond]?' ['is it not advisable that the ACVV should also be placed under the protection of our Synod, as with the Women's Missionary Society?']. The resolution was not approved ('Besproken en daargelaten' ['Discussed and left at that']). In 1911 Stellenbosch asked the congress 'ons uiterste te doen onze ACVV onder de Synode van de Nederlandsch Gereformeerde Kerk te krijgen' ['to do our outmost to get our ACVV under

138 CA, A1953, 3/2/1 (ACVV congress reports) 1914. For an example of this in practice, see CA, A1953, Add 1/2/3/1/1 (Beaconsfield) 15 May 1907.

139 B. Clark, 'History of the Roman-Dutch Law of Marriage from a Socio-Economic Perspective', in D.P. Visser (ed.), *Essays on the History of Law* (Cape Town: Juta, 1989), pp.177-178. Roman-Dutch matrimonial law awarded husbands matrimonial power which gave them 'guardianship' over their wives, in terms of which they could deal with assets from joint estates as they pleased.

The term 'dominion' has been used by Robyn Muncy in *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform: 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) to describe the 'interlocking network of women' involved in the provision of welfare in the United States. As Alice Kessler-Harris explains in her review article 'Women and welfare: Public Interventions in Private Lives' (*Radical History Review* 56 (1993)), the word 'dominion' indicates both 'its self-governing nature' and the 'limits on its power'.

140 Jeffrey Butler, 'Afrikaner Women and the Creation of Ethnicity in a Small South African Town, 1902-1950', in L. Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in South Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989), pp.66-67.

the auspices of the DRC Synod']. Cryptic minutes suggest that yet again executive members sidestepped the issue by avoiding discussion: '(v)oorgesteld door de Sekretaresse en gesteund door Paarl dat van dit punt afgestapt zal worden. Aangenomen' ['the Secretary suggested with Paarl's support that this point be left aside. Accepted'].¹⁴¹

In the mid-1910s, the ACVV's independent status was questioned by representatives of the Dutch Reformed Church. The DRC formed its *Inwendige Zending* ('Internal Mission') in 1915. As the name chosen by this committee for poor relief implied, its task was to reach and rescue those who qualified as members of the *volk*. ACVV leaders later claimed that their organisation had urged the church to form *Inwendige Zending*. However, the latter was convinced that it should play a leading role. At the ACVV's congress in 1916, a spokesman for the church committee asked the ACVV not only for money, but also to henceforth consult the church before allocating any funds 'daar die ACVV niet altijd in staat was om behoorlike onderzoek naar zaken in te stellen' ['because the ACVV is not always able to properly investigate matters']. The congress voted to support the committee financially.¹⁴² A subsequent letter in which Roos urged members to contribute to the salary of A.D. Luckhoff, the secretary for *Inwendige Zending*, suggested close identification with and support for the commission: 'Denk er aan Zusters, als wij zeggen kunnen, Onze Sekretaris! Welk een eer!' ['Think, Sisters, if we could say, Our Secretary! What an honour!'] However, the ACVV still declined to consult the church on matters of policy or finance.¹⁴³ At this time, the independent status of the women's organisations went unchallenged.

8. The Consolidation of Volksmoeder Discourse, 1914-1918

The congress of 1914 was the last in which 'New Women' and suffragettes would feature. During the First World War, the energies of pro-suffrage organisations in South Africa were redirected to support for the war-effort. Votes for women were no longer a burning public issue - consequently, the need to underline differences between ideals held up to Dutch-Afrikaans women and *nuwerwetse vrouwen* (newfangled women) was also less pressing.

141 CA, DRC, V21, 1/1/2 (ACVV congress minutes) 'Book Two', 1910 and 1911.

142 CA, DRC, V21, 1/5 (ACVV executive minutes), 20 Feb. 1935.

143 *De Goede Hoop*, 15 June 1916, p.295; *Onderhandelinge tussen ACVV en Kerklike Overheid in Kaapland* (Paarl: Paarl Drukkers Maatskappy, 1949); *Eendrag*, Nov. 1935, p.111.

The latter half of the 1910s were also years of political ferment and the rapid growth of Afrikaner nationalism - in which women also played a more visible role. In 1915, some 3000 women representing 50 000 women (according to *De Burger*) from across the country marched to the Union Buildings to deliver a petition. They were protesting against the arrest of the Boer generals for their part in the *Rebellie*, the movement resisting South African military support for Britain's war effort.¹⁴⁴

As Kruger points out, 'the women's march was probably the first mass action of women that had clear nationalist goals'.¹⁴⁵ Participants characterised their action as a powerful but quiet entry into the male sphere of public politics. They as well as Afrikaner nationalist men celebrated the march as an expression of national unity.¹⁴⁶ Women from across the country were also pivotal to the *Helpmekaar Beweging*. This 'Help one another other Movement' was initially founded to collect money for the families of jailed rebels, but became another organisation set to combat 'white' poverty. Soon after the march and two years after launch of the National Party, Transvaal women founded the *Vroue Nasionale Party* (Women's National Party).

The *Vrouwenmonument* campaign and women's participation in nationalist politics certainly contributed to their more frequent portrayal in Dutch-Afrikaans publications. Brink has correctly pointed to the 'clear convergence between the development of the ideal of the 'volksmoeder' and the rise of Afrikaner nationalism'.¹⁴⁷ Grass-roots organisation for the National Party coincided with the appearance of new Dutch-Afrikaans publications boosting the growth of a nationalist print culture. *De Burger's* publication from 1915 was important for popularising Afrikaner nationalist politics in the western Cape. From 1916 *Die Huisgenoot* (The Home Companion), first published in Dutch but soon a primarily Afrikaans publication, was also crucial to the construction of cultural nationalism. In 1917, *De Goede Hoop* also formally switched to Afrikaans.

144 Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', pp.157-8.

145 *Ibid.*

146 *Ibid.*, p.160.

147 E. Brink, 'Man-made women: Gender, Class and the Ideology of the Volksmoeder' in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990), p.279.

Isabel Hofmeyr has commented on how Afrikaans cultural publications 'took every imaginable phenomena of people's worlds and then repackaged these as "Afrikaans"'¹⁴⁸. *Die Brandwag* and *Die Huisgenoot*, marketed as 'family magazines' for Afrikaans speakers, also featured articles on appropriately domestic matters for specifically female consumption, for example on 'Afrikaans' needlework, furniture, and dress.¹⁴⁹ ACVV leaders participated in this construction of an Afrikaans domesticity. In 1917, Roos explained what it meant to be an Afrikaner:

Wij noemen ons 'n Afrikaanse vereniging, omdat wij niets anders dan 'Afrikaners' kunnen zijn, en wij geven daarvoor te kennen, dat wij alles wat Afrikaans is lief hebben; onze oude meubelen, de zedelijkheid en reinheid van onze vaders, de manier waarop wij onze kinderen kleden, onze taal ...¹⁵⁰

[We call ourselves an Afrikaans organisation because we can be no other than 'Afrikaners', and we thus declare that we love all that is Afrikaans; our old furniture, the morality and virtue of our fathers, the way in which we dress our children, our language ...]

As the lino-cuts of grim nineteenth century voortrekkerwomen defying the might of British imperialism, and pictures of the smiling winners of voortrekker dress competitions enlivening the ACVV's *Die Huisgenoot* columns suggest, the construction of a gendered Afrikaner identity continued apace (see plates 9 and 10).¹⁵¹ Snap-shots of appropriately-dressed toddlers in miniature oxwagons also signified mothers' crucial role in fashioning children into members of the *volk*.¹⁵²

From 1918, nationalist men also articulated a more coherent *volksmoeder* discourse. The skirmishes around suffrage of previous years were being replaced by definitive texts on women's identity and role, notably Willem Postma's book *Die Boervrou. Moeder van haar Volk*. Postma's interpretation (he rejected suffrage for women and their participation in politics) was presented as definitive. But as Kruger has pointed out, 'the *volksmoeder* discourse was not uniform nor was it static'¹⁵³. Women would soon be vocal in their explanations of the *volksmoeder* ideal.

148 Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words', p.111.

149 *Die Brandwag* already had a page devoted to 'die kleding en modedrag van die Afrikaanse Vrouwe en Meisies' ['the clothing and fashion wear of the Afrikaans women and girls'] in Aug. 1910. The articles cited by Hofmeyr dated from 1918, when this campaign took on significant dimensions.

150 *De Huisgenoot*, July 1917, p.85.

151 *Die Huisgenoot*, Jan. 1919, pp.616-7.

152 *Ibid.*, June 1918, p.47.

Conclusion

In the first fifteen years of its existence, the ACVV left its mark on Afrikaner nationalist politics. Its leaders and organisers often articulated ideas that exhibited strong continuities with late nineteenth century notions of women's role. But their letters and speeches increasingly exhibited a new, clearly ethnicised version of Afrikaner nationalism. The acrimonious beginnings of the ZACVV also reflected the diversity of 'Afrikaner nationalisms' at this time. Women from the Cape were participating in a particular construction of the *volk* - one with narrowly circumscribed ethnic boundaries.

The ACVV also played an important role in the post-war promotion of Dutch. In this respect, Dutch-Afrikaans women were not simply the recipients of a male-constructed discourse about women's role. *Zusters* participated in the blending of older notions of maternal piety with ideas about women's duties to the *volk*. From 1908 nationalist men also began to incorporate images of women into popular Afrikaans culture. Through the *Vrouwenmonument* campaign, a conscious attempt was made to construct a public identity for women that proclaimed their membership of the *volk*. If this was a response to women's participation in nationalist politics, the new discourse celebrated women as passive icons of war-time suffering. This development coincided with a vigorous debate about whether and how women should take action in the public sphere. Although ACVV leaders were careful to distance themselves from the *nuwerwetse vrou*, they also defended their departure from 'traditions' confining women to the home. But debates about suffrage largely disappeared from Dutch newspapers in the Cape during the First World War. With the launch of *Die Huisgenoot* and the publication of books celebrating Afrikaner womanhood at the end of the decade, a coherent notion of the *volksmoeder* was established.

During these years cultural nationalism was central to the ACVV's activities. While local branches were involved in the day-to-day activities of providing for the (Afrikaans and white) poor, they were also encouraged to promote 'Afrikaner' history and language. The high-profile activities of ACVV leaders often concerned the official status of Dutch.

The DRC's *volkskongres* in 1916, where Roos spoke, signalled a rising concern amongst petty-bourgeois Afrikaner nationalists about white impoverishment. From the late 1910s, leading ACVV women also began to concentrate more heavily on welfare work. This is the subject of the next chapters. But first, a closer look at some of the subjects of the 'poor white problem' is in order.

153 Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p.196.

Chapter Three

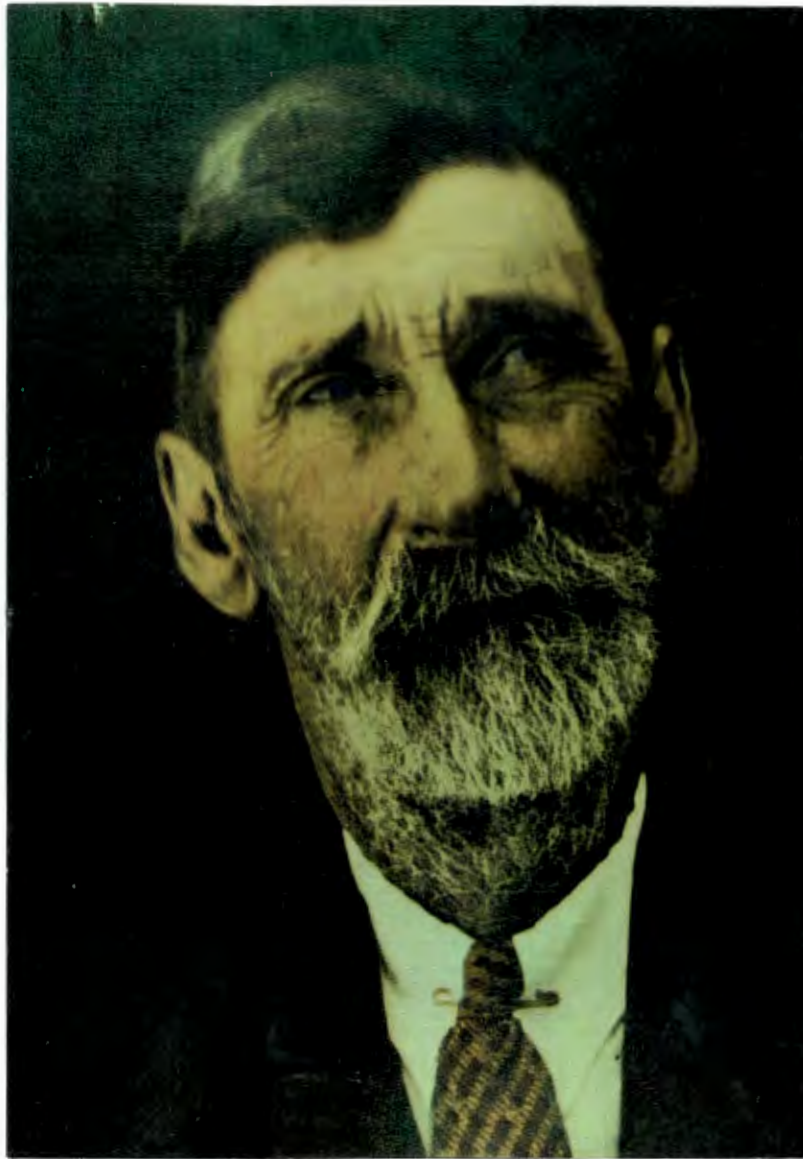
Working Lives of Poor Whites in the Rural and Urban Cape, c.1910 - 1939



Plate 11: The teacher at Swartfontein farm, district Sutherland, and her pupils. The photograph was taken by one *Ds* Vernon Marais in 1928, and the teacher identified as Mrs J.C. Marais.



Plate 12. A family in Yorkshire Estate, near Landsdowne Road, Cape Town, 1932.



Plates 13 and 14. Portraits from Francina Wileman's bedroom wall: her parents, Daniel and Elizabeth Rossouw in c. 1935.



Snapshots from Francina Wileman's family album, c.1930. *Plate 15*: Francina in her first, self-made, evening dress. She was visiting her sister (married to a forest worker) on Table Mountain. *Plate 16*: Francina (right) and her older sisters Magrieta (middle) and Elizabeth at Gordon's Bay. Francina already worked in the office of a furniture shop and Magrieta at a hat factory. Elizabeth never left home to earn a wage, but cared for her parents.

Chapter Three

... op Niekerkshoop ... versukkelde vrouens met knoetsige hande en lewendige oë vol belangstelling: ek het so gewens ek ken elkeen se lewensloop: maar so wens jy altyd op sulke plekke.¹

[... at Niekerkshoop ... worn-out women with gnarled hands and lively eyes full of interest: how I wished I knew each one's life story: but one always wishes this in such places.]

Introduction

Among the many life histories recorded in 1929 for the Carnegie Commission Report, that of a Mrs van Wyk, while not exceptional, is worth recounting. At forty-three, she was 'n (s)kraal, versukkelde ou vroujie met 'n temerige spraak' ['a thin, worn-out little woman with a sing-song voice'].² Perhaps past experience accounted for her appearance.

Her family farmed with some one thousand small livestock in the Little Karoo districts of Prince Albert and Rietbron, but owned no land. While drought and debt eventually ruined her father, Mrs Van Wyk grew up on farms where the family hired pasture. The girl had only a few months of schooling. As the family could hire no labour, the three sisters worked alongside their five brothers. As a child, her task was to look after sheep in the veld. When she married Kasper van Wyk, the twenty-nine year old son of a *bywoner* (sharecropper) in 1914, she could add thirty head of small livestock to her husband's twenty-six.³ The interviewer's cryptic note on Kasper's father applied as much to the next generation - 'Vee gehad, getrek waar hy grond kon kry, gehuur. Swaar geleef.' ['Had stock, trekked where he could find land, hired. A hard life.']⁴

1 M.E. Rothmann, comment in a diary she kept during her travels as organising secretary for the ACVV, (Cape Archives (hereafter CA), A1953 (ACVV Private Collection), A1/2/1, 1928). The meeting concerned maternity clinics for rural women - see Chapter Five.

2 University of Stellenbosch Document Centre, M.E. Rothmann Collection (hereafter USDC, MER), 55.M.3 (Carnegie Commission Investigations, 1929) (5), Prince Albert, (Case Study)25, p.(age)97. (Note: Page numbers have been provided where possible, but the hand-written documents are not always numbered.)

3 USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (5), Prince Albert 25, pp.100-101.

4 *Ibid.*, p.98.

For the next few years, the couple lived the migratory life of poor *bywoners*. Kasper herded stock in exchange for water and a place to stay; when he fenced farmers' land they lived in a tent. For the birth of her first child, Mrs van Wyk went to a small village where a doctor could be called if the midwife's help did not suffice. Her second child was born on the farm, with no doctor available: 'Ou tante van Eck' ['Old aunt van Eck'] attended the birth, and her sister visited for a day. Now however, the family was making some progress and their livestock increased steadily. But drought set in and by 1916 their herd had dwindled from five hundred to a mere twenty. With a third child of five months (helped into the world by 'n kaffermeid' ['a caffer woman/ servant']), the couple moved to a farm in Knysna.

Kasper cleared forest in return for a share of the profits and a house. After three years he could buy some cattle. He moved to another farm where the prospects were better, sold his cattle, invested in tools and employed workers. He had a good crop and reinvested his money. They were doing well. Mrs Van Wyk 'had altyd melk en eiers' ['always had milk and eggs'], and the couple built themselves a house. But once again disaster struck. "Toe kry hy 'n trek op sy harsens" ... hy had 'n soort verlamming, is weggeneem na [die] hospitaal en daar dood ...' ['Then he had a seizure ... a kind of paralysis, was taken to hospital and died there...']⁵

In 1929, five years after her husband's death, Mrs van Wyk was looking after an invalid aunt (who was also the daughter and widow of a *bywoner*), and receiving food and clothing from poor relief. Five of her children were in government institutions, and her baby was in another woman's care.⁶

After recounting her story it was Mrs van Wyk's turn to pose the interviewer a question:

"Mevrou", sê sy, " ek is nie geleerd nie, maar ek het 'n konsensie ... En dit is vir my wonderlik. Drie maal het ons op en op gegaan tot ons net moet deurgaen - en dan word ons teruggeslaan. Waarom sou dit gewees het?"⁷

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.97, 99.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Prince Albert 21, pp.83, 98. Her 14 years old son was learning shoe-making in an industrial school at George; two children aged 8 and 11 years were in a Rietbron hostel; a seven year old child was in a western Cape shelter for poor white children; another had been placed in Alexandra, a school for the mentally retarded. It is possible that the youngest was placed in a foster-home by state-officials, but Rothmann's phrasing suggests an informal arrangement.

⁷ USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (5), Prince Albert 21, p.99.

["Madam", she said, " I am not educated, but I reflect on things ... And it seems to me incredible. Three times we went up and up and when we were just coming through - then we were pushed down. Why did this happen?"]

If the latter attempted an answer, she did not record it. It was Mrs van Wyk's narrative, her own understanding of her past experience, that she thought valuable:

Dit is baie moeilik om jou aandag op haar te hou, maar dit is die moeite werd. Sy *dink*. Ek het haar 'n tweede maal gaan besoek.⁸

[It is very difficult to keep your attention on her, but it is worth while. She *thinks*. I visited her a second time.]

No historian has yet attempted to reconstruct the experiences of marginal, white Afrikaans-speaking women and men on the Cape *platteland* of the early decades of this century. Literature on sharecropping and farm work has been heavily oriented towards blacks - and has largely neglected to study the Cape. The few historical studies of poor whites scarcely deal with women, and do not move beyond generalisations to research the gender dynamics of survival for rural, landless whites.⁹ Hence the importance of the meticulous notes from which the story of Mrs van Wyk was drawn and the insights these offer into factors that shaped the experiences of poor, landless families in the rural Cape. Moreover, they were almost unique in recording the words of an impoverished Afrikaans woman in 1929.

However, the reader is aware of another, pervasive voice. Life histories are not unmediated accounts of their subjects' experience but necessarily bear the mark of the researcher. Hence feminist scholarship's insistence that the latter's 'perspective ... in terms of gender, class, culture, disciplinary orientation - be taken into account and acknowledged.'¹⁰ If the stories told in this chapter answer some questions about the experience of impoverished men and women trying to survive in the countryside or newly resident in towns and cities, they beg others regarding the identity and motives of an author who not only interviewed people from particular racial, linguistic and class backgrounds, but also listened to women's voices with interest and compassion.

By 1929, M.E. Rothmann was a prominent member of the ACVV whose research for the Carnegie Commission was inspired by strong nationalist convictions. Although she did not

8 *Ibid.*, p.97. Original emphasis.

9 See Robert Morrell (ed.), *Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa, 1880-1940* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992). In his review of this volume, 'Putting the History of White Poverty in South Africa on the Agenda' (*South African Historical Journal* 28 (1993)), Christopher Saunders provides a useful survey of existing scholarship.

10 Personal Narratives Group, *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.201.

call herself a feminist, Rothmann's research was also motivated by a keenly felt concern for women.¹¹ Indeed, Mrs Van Wyk's story was published in Rothmann's *Mother and Daughter in the Poor Family* (1932), where the author motivated state intervention to alleviate the specific plight of poor white women.

Interspersed with Rothmann's interviews are extracts from conversations recorded some sixty-two years later, shaped by an interviewer sharing an interest in how social constructions of gender shaped women's lives, but not Rothmann's nationalist sympathies. My own interviews, motivated by and incorporated into a very different project, likewise bear the mark of the researcher.

Even so, hand-written notes from a sharp-eyed contemporary and transcripts of remembered childhood and youth may provide a glimpse of everyday lives otherwise lost to historians:

personal narratives are particularly rich sources because, attentively interpreted, they illuminate both the logic of individual courses of action and the effects of system-level constraints within which those courses evolve...¹²

By considering the interplay between economic and social processes that shaped the lives of such people as Mrs Van Wyk and limited the choices they made, the historian can also attempt an answer to her question about her family's fate.

Part One: Rural Lives

1. Patterns of Landlessness and 'White' Impoverishment in the Cape Countryside, c.1920-1929

If the late nineteenth century and devastation of the South African War saw a growth in the number of white landless families on the Cape *platteland*, this process was exacerbated in subsequent decades. Growing poverty amongst whites was signalled by considerable rural migration as landless families trekked in search of work or cheaper land to hire. Arid and sparsely populated districts in the northern and north-western Cape gained many erstwhile residents of more established farming areas. Studies also showed a steady migration of poor and landless whites to the Cape's coastal regions during the 1910s and 1920s, and the growth of an urban population in the province's cities on the coast.¹³

11 Rothmann's involvement in the ACVV from the early 1920s is discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

12 Personal Narratives Group, *Interpreting Women's Lives*, p.5.

This pattern is given meaning by the detail and diversity of individual histories contained in the Carnegie documents and life history interviews, as people remember moving between farms, to rural villages, and eventually to cities in their individual struggle for survival. But histories of landlessness and poverty are better understood once situated within the broad outlines of social and economic processes that helped shape rural peoples' lives from the turn of the century and - for the purposes of this chapter - especially the 1920s and 1930s.

During these years the development of agriculture in the Cape remained highly uneven. Farmers in districts like Ceres in the south-west successfully introduced market-oriented production in the 1920s; sheep-farming districts in the eastern Cape still boasted many well-to-do farmers.¹⁴ But inefficient marketing was the norm for much of the Cape interior.¹⁵ Many farmers sold only a negligible amount of produce; if they grew enough for their own subsistence, they often lacked cash. In spite of the extension of railways from the mid-1910s, farmers' lack of elementary transport contributed to this situation. Arguably the poorest section of the Cape, Namaqualand, was still greatly hampered by lack of transport in the late 1930s. The average Namaqualand farmer still lived 130 or more miles from the nearest railway station. Twenty per cent of farmers had motorised vehicles; the same percentage had no means of transport. Of the rest, only three per cent owned a wagon and

13 J.W.F. Grosskopf, *The Poor White Problem in South Africa: Report of the Carnegie Commission, Part I. Economic Report: Rural Impoverishment and Rural Exodus* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932), pp.66, 184; W.M. MacMillan, *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development* (Johannesburg: Johannesburg Central News Agency, 1919), p.47; P.W. Kotzé, *Namakwaaland. 'n Sosiologiese Studie van 'n Geïsoleerde Gemeenskap* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1943), p.49. It was mainly the Kenhardt and Calvinia districts that attracted more people; during the same period, Namaqualand lost more people than it gained. Comparison of the 1904 and 1911 census counts show that during these years the population of Kenhardt and Calvinia increased by 24 per cent; the northern Cape districts gained 59 per cent.

14 In south-western districts like Ceres, farmers of the 1920s decreased their herds, improved their stock, and increasingly favoured the production of cereals and fruit (P. J. van der Merwe, *Trek: Studies oor die Mobiliteit van die Pioniersbevolking aan die Kaap* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1945), p.149).

15 In 1926, the Board of Trade and Industry reported that very few wheat farmers took organised action in order to sell their crops; wheat was mostly bought directly from farmers by millers, produce merchants and dealers. In the main wheat-producing districts, big millers sent their own buyers to acquire produce directly from farmers. In other areas, produce merchants and storekeepers acted as intermediaries. Farmers were frequently their debtors and gave their wheat in payment of the debt. In the 1930s, the struggling farmers of Namaqualand rarely used cash in business transactions. Most had barter arrangements with local shopkeepers (Kotze, *Namakwaaland*, p.108; *Report on the Inquiry into the Methods and Costs of Wheatgrowing and Milling* (Report no. 67) (Cape Town: Cape Times, 1926)).

donkeys suitable for transporting produce. Most farmers sold their crops or stock to travelling dealers or the nearest shopkeeper.¹⁶

As in earlier times, drought plagued Cape farmers with monotonous regularity, and certainly contributed to rural migration.¹⁷ Thus drought often dominated the accounts of people from the coastal Albertinia/Riversdale districts who lost access to land. It was the 1916 drought that forced the Van Wyk family to leave Prince Albert. Jacob Gouws made reasonable progress after he married and received his inheritance - a 500 morgen farm near Prince Albert - in 1908. With the drought of 1919, he lost his ostriches and two-thirds of his 400-odd livestock, and could harvest only enough for his family's consumption. After drought broke in 1921, he increased his herds to about 600. From 1924 drought set in again, and three years later he had lost what stock he had gained. Like some 3000 people in the district, the family now received food rations from the local authority's distress relief scheme.¹⁸ But drought was not more frequent during these years than in the nineteenth century. Farmers were less able to survive dry years because overstocking and erosion had reduced the value of pasture, and because farm sizes had diminished as land was divided amongst heirs (Jacob Gouws's father had split his large farm amongst his six sons).¹⁹

The success of some farmers made the survival of others more difficult. In the eastern Cape's predominantly sheep-farming districts, poor and landless farmers were crowded out as well-to-do farmers bought up land and introduced fencing - a process virtually completed by 1914 (and made compulsory in many districts from the mid-'20s).²⁰ Fewer shepherds were needed once flocks were protected by jackal-proof fences. Landowners, intent on

16 Kotze, *Namakwaland*, p.32.

17 From 1882 to the late 1930s, severe drought recurred approximately every seventh year. By the late nineteenth century, wasteful farming methods already made the effects of drought much worse than previously (C.W. De Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa, Social and Economic* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1942), p.189).

18 USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (5), Prince Albert 7, p.29.

19 *Ibid.*, p.28. Statistics from Namaqualand describe the same process: In 1916, 208 Namaqualand farms were registered as 208 separate plots of land, with one registered owner each. The 369 freehold farms of 1938 were divided into 1191 separate pieces of land between 670 owners (Kotze, *Namakwaland*, p.114).

20 According to Grosskopf in *Rural Impoverishment*, this trend was evident from about 1905; by 1914 most farms were fenced in (pp.97- 99).

conserving fenced-in grazing land for their own flocks, were also less tolerant of stock-owning *bywoners*.²¹

The gradual increase of land prices as *vrygrond* became scarcer in established Cape districts and farmers turned to market-oriented production also affected the fortunes of smaller and landless farmers. Because of rising prices, landowners were less tolerant of sharecroppers or *trekboere* wanting to rent land. First evident in the eastern Cape and western Cape coastal districts of Albertinia/Riversdale, this practice spread to other districts in the 1920s and 30s.²²

Drought, the modernisation of farming and rising land prices did not necessarily or immediately push families off the land, but often reduced access. In the 1920s, *bywoners* still made a living in some of the older Cape districts - although with varying degrees of success. The Crous family were sharecroppers on a smallholding near Swellendam where they had 'groot landerye en tuine en vrugteboorde en goed ... 'n paar koeie, ... 'n paar varke, hoenders ensovoorts' ['big lands and gardens and orchards and things ... a few cows, a few pigs, chickens etcetera']. For Mrs Van Zijl (formerly Crous), the pleasure of remembering a rural childhood was tempered by the realities of non-ownership. Their produce was shared, because the family

het eintlik om 'n deel gewerk sien. Een deel het gegaan vir, [my vader] was nie die baas van die plek nie. Een deel het gegaan vir die, vir die baas, en een deel het gegaan vir ons.²³

[actually worked for a share you see. One share went to, my father was not the owner of the place. One share went to the, to the *baas*, and one share came to us.]

While Kate Beukes (née Oosthuyzen) shared fond memories of the *platteland*, she remembered her family - who farmed in Riversdale until 1925 - as poor people who worked

21 *Ibid.*, p.99.

22 In Ceres, where farmers increasingly cultivated fruit and cereals on a commercial basis (especially from the early 1920s), land prices also increased. Modernising Ceres farmers - who often owned farms elsewhere - also became more vigilant about their properties in the Karoo. Some still felt the need for an overseer, usually a poor *bywoner* with permission to graze his own stock once the farmer had departed. Others still hired *veld* to 'a poor man with little stock'. Farmers who owned land elsewhere still trekked to the Karoo in the 1930s, especially in dry years. But rather than earning a few pounds by hiring out *veld* for grazing, landowners preferred to preserve their increasingly valuable land. The prices for hiring out pasture reflected this trend. While the general price per hundred livestock was between 2s.6d. and 10s. a month before 1900, farmers were charging £1 by 1938. (Van der Merwe, *Trek*, pp.44, 153-4; Grosskopf, *Rural Impoverishment*, pp.123-4; 157-158.)

23 Interview with Mrs H.P.E. Van Zyl, Observatory (Cape Town), 23 Aug. 1991.

hard to make a living. Her father was 'maar 'n arm man' ['only a poor man'] who worked 'op 'n ander man se plaas' ['on another man's farm']. Her childhood was spent on different farms where her father kept his few cows, looked after the owner's stock and farmed 'om die helfte vir die - hy het swaar gewerk ... jy het tien sakke gars, of tien sakke rog, tien sakke rog moet jy die helfte gee ... ' ['for half of the - he worked hard ... you have ten bags barley, or ten bags rye, ten bags barley you must give half ...']²⁴

Mrs Driver, less voluble about a childhood she preferred to forget, reluctantly remembered 'n groot familie, maar ons was, soos ek jou gesê het, ons was arm mense' ['a large family, but we were, like I told you, we were poor people']. The family (there were eight children) still led a precarious existence as *bywoners* in Albertinia of the 1920s. 'Hulle was nie gevestigde mense nie wat op een spesifieke plek gebly het nie. Nie sover ek kan onthou nie. Getrek en so aan, en teruggekom en so' ['They weren't settled people who stayed in one specific place. Not as I recall. Moved and so on, and came back and so on']. Her father still eked out a living as a sharecropper: '[my pa] het 'n bietjie tuin gemaak, maar nie as 'n bestaan nie, so vir sy eie gewin sal ek sê. Jy weet, hy't gesaai en so. Om die deel' ['my father did a bit of gardening, but not as a living, for his own use I mean. You know, he sowed and so on. For a share'].²⁵

In the late nineteenth century and until the 1910s, farmers who wanted to establish themselves independently had been able to find cheaper land in the *trekvelden* of the northern and north-western Cape.²⁶ *Trekboere* who roamed districts like Namaqualand and Kenhart in the northern Cape of the 1920s and 1930s still hired crown land. A local saying - 'ek wil nie 'n slaaf van grond wees nie' ['I don't want to be enslaved to land'] - expressed a reluctance to buying land in an arid region where those who could not afford large tracts of land could survive better as nomads.²⁷ Others bought Crown land on hire-purchase, or

24 Interview with Mrs H.K. Beukes, Milnerton (Cape Town) 6 Nov. 1991.

25 Interview with Mrs A. Driver, Milnerton, 8 Nov. 1991.

26 Van der Merwe, *Trek*, p.44; *Report of the Trekpaths Commission* (Cape Town: The Province, 1936), p.6. In the nineteenth century, an area commonly called the 'trekvelden' extended roughly from Clanwilliam in the east to Hopetown in the west. '(C)overing many thousands of square miles [the trekvelden] was the common grazing ground of numerous nomadic stock owners and bastards who occupied it permanently, as well as of a large number of farmers along its fringes, who occupied it with their flocks each year' (*ibid*).

27 Van der Merwe, *Trek*, p.53.

hired land on long-term leases.²⁸ 'My ouers het pagplase gehad' ['My parents had quitrent farms'] recalled erstwhile Namaqualander Maria Stamroodt of her childhood in the 1920s:

Ons het byvoorbeeld in die somer het ons op een plaas gebly, daar is nou landerye en waatlemoen en spanspek sal ek maar sê, en in die winter trek jy na die uitlegveld toe, en daar is ... dit weer net met jou vee ... en jy het ook 'n opslaantent, en al die klas van goed.²⁹

[We for example in the summer we stayed on one farm, there were lands and watermelon and sweet melon, and in the winter you trekked to the outlying veld, and there ... you were just with your stock ... and you also had a tent and all those kind of things.]

For those who hankered after their own land, success was still possible in the north-western Cape of the 1910s and 1920s. An illiterate man ('kan nie sy naam teken nie' ['can't sign his name']) who arrived in the Garies district 1916 first worked as a shepherd for 10s. per month and food. After two years he went 'met perd en saal en toom na Skuinskraal op Burke se plaas om 'n deel' ['with horse and saddle and bridle to Skuinskraal on Burke's farm for sharecropping']. He married 'n brandarm meisie' ['a penniless girl'] and remained a *kneg* [farm-servant] for five years. In 1923 he bought a small farm for cash, to which he soon added more land. By 1929, having sold some land profitably, he owned a farm of about 4000 morgen.³⁰

But the price of land for sale or for hire changed significantly during the 1920s. As state land became scarcer, farmers who could obtain grazing at low rentals and even for free at the turn of the century, had to pay ever higher prices.³¹ Arid conditions also made farming precarious. In the drought-stricken 1920s, few could successfully make the transition from *kneg* to *baas*. Like many others, the semi-literate son of 'arm trek-mense' ['poor trek-people'] worked on the railways in 1925, then hired forty morgen of land. But drought and the high rental (£18 p/a) forced him to quit within a year.³²

Drought and the copper industry's decline dislodged toe-holds on the land in the north-west of the mid-1920s, and newspapers described 'ramp, ellende en verskriklike ontberings' ['disaster, misery and terrible suffering']. *Die Burger* mentioned in passing that 'coloureds'

28 G.E.N. Ross, *Landbou-Krediet: 'n Inleiding tot die Studie van die Probleem van Kredietverskaffing vir die Boer in Suid Afrika* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, nd c.1926), p.59.

29 Interview with Miss M. Stamroodt, Cape Town, 18 Oct. 1991.

30 USDC, MER, 55.M.3(9), Garies notebook.

31 Grosskopf, *Rural Impoverishment*, p.124.

32 USDC, MER, 55.M.3(9), Garies notebook.

on mission stations suffered most ('baie van hulle het omgekom van die honger' ['many of them have died from hunger']).³³ In 1928, the Springbok magistrate reported that stock theft by 'coloured people' was rife. Herders who lost their own stock as well as underfed and dismissed shepherds were 'forced to steal to maintain themselves and family'.³⁴ But while indigent 'coloureds' received occasional food hand-outs (and 'natives' missed out altogether), struggling whites received substantially more state aid. By the end of the decade, landless *trekboere* and landowners alike in the north-western Cape (and in drought-stricken areas elsewhere) did frequent stints of road and railway work - funded by the government as poor relief.³⁵ In 1928, Rothmann found a Mrs Dippenaar living in tiny Soebatsfontein (about sixty miles from Garies) in a peculiarly modern version of the *trekboer*'s traditional *matjieshuis*:

Haar huisie, van 1 kamer, is van oopgeblaaide petrolblikke gemaak, baie netjies: die staan-dak is van matjies: die hele ding het my baie vreemd getref as die toepassing van die matjieshuis-idee op hedendaagse boustof. Van binne is die blikke uitgeplak met stukke papiere: blaai van 'n tydskrif, gelykvormig. Lyk na Landbou-weekblad...³⁶

[Her little one-roomed house is made from opened, flattened petrol tins, very neat: the pitched roof is of woven reed-mats; the whole structure struck me as a very strange application of the *matjieshuis* idea with contemporary building materials. Inside, the tins are evenly papered over with pages from a magazine. Looks like Farmer's Weekly...]

Mrs Dippenaar's house was perhaps the architectural expression of the family's semi-proletarianised status. At the time, her husband was away working on the road. But he possessed some livestock and when the interviewer next visited Soebatsfontein, the whole family had trekked after pasture.

33 *Die Burger*, 10 Jan. 1925.

34 Central Archives, Pretoria (hereafter PTA), JUS, (Volume) 1/82/28, (File) 439, Magistrates report for 1928, Springbok (Namaqualand).

35 A report on distress relief in the Van Rhynsdorp and Namaqualand districts dealt with eighteen road gangs of altogether 802 men. 69 were landowners (including men in possession of 'government land, not yet paid'), 260 hired land and 473 owned neither land nor livestock. In 1925, *Die Burger* noted that men employed on a relief scheme near the western Cape village of Ladismith were not only 'the usual poor white' types - men 'used to living from hand to mouth', but included 'landowners'. (PTA, VWN, SW46/16, 245, 'Distress Van Rhynsdorp and Namaqualand', report from Special Industrial Inspector, 22 May 1929; *Die Burger*, 'Grondbesitters werk op spoorwegbou', 14 Feb 1925.)

36 USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (2), Garies 11, p.23. The *matjieshuis* (mat-house) was the living quarters of many northern and north-western Cape *trekboere*. Copied from Khoi herders, it consisted of a structure of sticks, usually bent to form a dome-like shape, supporting a covering of woven reed-mats.

Roadworks were officially conceived of as temporary drought-relief measures, and throughout the 1920s unemployed or destitute whites wanting state aid were advised to apply for admission to Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) settlements and government forestry schemes - and submission to official scrutiny and control. 'As arm blankes gehelp word dan word hulle eers op die proef gestel en gesif om te sien wie genoeg werklus en selfrespek besit om 'n sukses op 'n nedersetting of so iets te maak' ['If poor whites are helped they are first put to test and screened in order to see who has enough industry and self-respect to make a success on a settlement or something like it'] explained *Die Burger* in 1925.³⁷ But this employment for needy whites was also temporary. A contract from 1928 bound an erstwhile farmer to a year's work 'met pik en graaf' ['with pick and spade'] at any state settlement; he had to leave when requested, thus relinquishing 'enige aanspraak tot verdere hulp van die aard' ['any claim to further help of this nature'].³⁸

As nationalist politicians vied for support in the rural Cape, state aid to farmers became increasingly politicised.³⁹ While a correspondent to *Die Burger* in 1925 could complain that government only gave hand-outs to the indigent and neglected small farmers, more help was made available by the Pact government.⁴⁰ By 1928, farmers could apply for several forms of aid. At times of drought, they could apply for distress loans of stock or seed. Magistrates dealt with applications for Land Bank loans to buy land or install the vermin-proof fencing now required by law. But only buyers with some capital could make use of Land Bank loans that covered at most 60% of land value. New schemes more favourable to poorer farmers included the establishment of livestock cooperative societies,

37 *Die Burger*, 14 Feb. 1925.

38 PTA, VWN, SW61 1/3, (volume) 3, (file) 361. A missive from the Department of Labour to a settlement Welfare Officer in 1929 reprimanded him thus for inadequate record-keeping: 'the remarks column should show much more detail than the sheet indicates at present; for instance you should give general remarks on the sobriety of the settler, whether he is a good, bad, indifferent etc worker; you should comment on his character, and indicate whether in your opinion he is likely to succeed if transferred to any of the Department's other schemes...' (*ibid.*)

39 *Die Burger*, 'Mnr Petrus van Heerden voor die Kiesers Gee Raad aan Boere Kry Belofte van Ondersteuning', 7 Jan. 1925. The paper's correspondent remarked on the fact that, for the first time ever, ministers were visiting this constituency and asking farmers what they needed. In 1925, DRC minister A.D. Luckhoff, long a campaigner for Namaqualand's (white) poor, was accompanied by government ministers D.F. Malan (Nationalist) and Cresswell (Labour Party). But in some districts, Nationalist Party campaigners were members of official bodies like the *Landsraad* (Land Board) and defended vermin-proof fencing legislation unpopular with struggling farmers.

40 *Die Burger*, 'Die Nood in Namakwaland. Word die Regte mense Gehelp?', 6 Jan. 1925.

through which Land Bank loans for pure-bred stock was channelled (members bought animals on hire-purchase). But *bywoners* and poor *trekboere* were less likely to benefit from all but the regularly organised road and railway works.⁴¹

In Prince Albert of 1928, 'thousands of persons' were receiving food hand-outs from a new provincial government fund for (coloured and white) indigents.⁴² Those whites who lost their toe-hold on the land could also apply for free railway passes to look for work, or to the various forestry and church settlements. A lucky few were allocated land on irrigation schemes like those next to the Orange River in the northern Cape.

While landless families often managed to survive on the land for an extended period, many were eventually forced into nearby villages or towns. (A large percentage of families interviewed by the Carnegie Commission in 1929 lived in country towns.) Such families often combined wage-work with precarious efforts at self-employment. A *bywoner's* son, Willem Avenant had carted wood with a wagon and donkeys for 20 years by 1929. But he could only feed himself and his donkeys, and his family received poor relief and lived in a miserable house. Gert Muller (born 1894), did wage-work ('dagwerk') in order to buy a wagon. In 1929 he was transporting food for poor relief and earning fairly well. But by then many families working for wages. Erstwhile shepherd Piet Botes's family was staying in tiny Klaarstroom (between Prince Albert and Willowmore) in 1929 - the father and two sons did road-work.

Clearly, patterns of landlessness, white impoverishment, and race-discriminatory state aid were already established in the late 1920s. But the lean years of the Depression still lay ahead.

41 In *Landbou-Krediet*, Ross surveys the Land Bank's activities. In *The Use of the Chattel Mortgage (Notarial Bond) in Agricultural Finance* (Cape Town: Cape Times, 1932), E.H.D. Arndt compares the American and South African chattel mortgage systems. Ross notes that the Department of Labour did run a sharecropper programme for whites in a few districts - farmers received subsidies for accommodating *bywoners*. By 1926, some 500 *bywoners* had been placed on farms. Loans were available to farmers who were buying Crown land on hire-purchase and had been paying towards this for ten years or more. But finance from the Land Bank was not easily available to those without land. Both authors explain that stock could not be used as a surety whilst remaining in possession of the owner. The Department of Land's correspondence (PTA, LDB, R1513, 3, 1484) includes requests from farmers renting land or sharecroppers for loans for stock, and letters explaining that aid is not available. See, for example, G.W. Maas's letter on 21 March 1928 and the Department's reply.

42 PTA, JUS, 1/82/28, 439, Magistrate's report (Prince Albert) for 1928.

2. Depression and Options for Survival in the 1930s

Rothmann's interviews were conducted on the eve of the world-wide depression that exacerbated the (white) landlessness and poverty recorded by the commission. Two years after her 1929 survey, numerous countryside church councils (ever a good source of information about rural Afrikaans communities) emphasised the temporal woes of their flocks as drought and depression wreaked havoc in rural economies. As an eastern Cape DRC council explained in 1931, farmers could no longer sell staple products.⁴³ For the next two years, churches from across the northern, north-western and eastern Cape reported financial loss and poverty because of 'ontsettende droogtes' and 'geldskaarstes' ['terrible droughts and scarcity of money'].⁴⁴ As Mrs 'Gans' Erasmus, an ACVV member whose husband owned a farm near Cradock in the more well-to-do eastern Cape, recalled:

Ek sal vir jou sê, die mense het weer begin gelapte klere dra. Jy kon nie eintlik gaan koop nie, want jy het nie kontant nie, jy weet. En jy probeer jou boerdery hou, dat jy nie moet verkoop om jou lewe te maak nie.⁴⁵

[I'll tell you, people again began to wear patched clothes. You couldn't really buy, because you didn't have cash you know. And you tried to keep your farm, to keep from having to sell it in order to survive.]

In 1933, a northern Cape DRC minister reported that his poorer parishioners, dependent on manual labour, were unemployed and struggling to survive.⁴⁶ Mrs van Heerden (also from Cradock's ACVV) described how white sharecroppers worked for food alone:

bywoners het maar van die afval goedjies gelewe. Ek dink meer as een dag het hulle honger gewees Nee, dit was moeilike jare. Baie van hulle het maar op die plaas gaan werk net vir 'n stukkie kos. Never mind die geld, solank as hulle net kan kos kry. Vir hulle gesin en hulle kinders. Nee dit was moeilike jare, regtigwaar.⁴⁷

[sharecroppers lived from discards. I think they went hungry more than once No, those were difficult years. Many of them worked for farmers just for a bit of food. Never mind the money, so long as they got food. For the family and their children. No really, those were difficult years.]

43 CA, Archives of the Dutch Reformed Church (hereafter DRC), RA (Godsdiensverslag) 1/15 (for the year) 1931, p.259 (DRC of) Jansenville. See Chapter One, footnote 18 for an explanation of 'Godsdiensverslae' (Religious reports).

44 CA, DRC, RA1/15, 1931, Ceres, p.79; *ibid.*, Gibeon, p.181; RA1/16, 1933, Aurora, p.42; *ibid.*, Merweville, p.38; Beaufort-West, p.59; Brandvlei, p.62; Britstown, p.72; Burgersdorp, p.74; Colesberg, p.111.

45 Interview with Mrs Erasmus, Cradock, 27 June 1991.

46 CA, DRC, RA1/16, p.266.

47 Interview with Mrs M. van Heerden, Cradock, 26 June 1991.

In the Karoo district of Laingsburg, many *bywoners* were without transport and struggling to survive.⁴⁸ Numerous beggars ('Blanke mense hoor!' ['white people you know!']) knocked on the back doors of Cradock farm houses to ask for food.⁴⁹ And from Vryburg in the northern Cape came worried reports that help from better-off blacks was eroding racial barriers:

Van ons mense woon tussen vaalbosse in met 'n sak of seil oor die bos getrek Dan is daar die gevaar dat daar tussen een deel van ons sinkende landgenote en die natuereel een verbroedering kan opspring. Ons kan getuieenis aflê van gevalle waar ons blankes by die natuereel langs die pad aanklop het om voedsel (en die res)...⁵⁰

[Some of our people live in the bushes with a sack or canvas thrown across ... then there is the danger that a fraternisation may begin amongst some of our sinking countrymen. We have witnessed cases where our whites knocked at the doors of natives while on the road, to ask for food (and the rest)...]

In Namaqualand of the 1930s, numerous landowners and landless stockfarmers alike frequently resorted to stints of wage-work on the roads - divisional councils regularly provided roadwork as poor relief from 1929.⁵¹ By the late 1930s, permanent white wage-workers on farms were still rare; families preferred to trek between farms with their livestock.⁵² But most land was privately owned, and farmers charged prohibitive prices.⁵³ As modernising farmers fenced their properties, the trekpaths that farmers who bought crown land were legally required to honour were often closed - a practice supported by divisional councils.⁵⁴

48 CA, DRC, RA1/16, Laingsburg, p.376.

49 Interview with Erasmus.

50 CA, DRC, RA1/16, Vryburg, p.709.

51 Kotze, *Namakwaaland*, pp.138-9.

52 *Ibid.*, p.170.

53 By 1939, The usual price charged by private farmers was £1, and in dry months landowners charged as much as £3 10s. (Van der Merwe, *Trek*, p.53).

54 According to the Trekpaths Commission of 1936, legislation stipulated from 1860 that all farms granted by the Crown must include a reservation of thoroughfare rights; trekking farmers could legally claim the use of trekpaths as a condition of tenure of most farms in the Cape or by virtue of traditional user. The commission referred to the Supreme Court's (1914) definition of a trekpath as '(a) strip of considerable width along which stock may be driven and within the limits of which they may graze as they go.' Right of trekpath was defined as '(t)he right to drive stock over land affected by it and to depasture them en route within the trekpath limits'.

Letters from poor whites requesting government help increased from the early 1930s. Often penned by women, they reflected a common perception that the state was a likely source of aid. Older forms of patronage informed solicitations for help that personified the state as a wealthy relative or neighbour. 'Geachte Volks Welsijn' ['Dear Social Welfare'] wrote Mrs Green from Aughrabies in the northern Cape,

Hier Mede Versoek ik ook aan u om so Goed te Wees om My tot help te kom met ou kleere ou skoene want om as het Ware te se ik in My Man en My kinders is Nakent en kaal Voete...⁵⁵

[Hereby I also Request you to be so Good as to Help me with old clothes and shoes because to tell the Truth my Husband, my Children and I are Naked and bare Feet...]

'Daar u in oorvloed het en ons so arm, en die kou winter begint ...' ['Because you have plenty and we are so poor, and the cold winter begins ...'] ran a request to Minister Duncan and his wife from Calvinia's 'Baby Vlok'.⁵⁶ 'Kijk dan of julle tog as u blief tog nie ook iets aan mij kan doennie, ons is arm en leef maar bitter ...' ['Please see if you can also help me, we are poor and life is bitter...'] wrote Mrs Swart from a northern Cape settlement with a similar request for old clothes.⁵⁷ A widow from Ladismith, who washed clothes for a living, followed her description of penurious circumstances with a commonly expressed declaration of political loyalty: '(d)aar ik tog ook in volle ondersteuning van onze Regeerders is Hoop ik van Harte dat ik nie zal weggewijs zal wort nie...' ['because I am after all a staunch supporter of our Government my Heartfelt Hope is that I won't be turned away...']⁵⁸

While many women requested the basic necessities for living, men asked for loans to buy stock, seed or pay back debt.⁵⁹ But many applicants, male and female, set their sights even higher with requests for land. Mrs Jan Basson from the western Cape whose sickly husband and eldest son supported eight more children by carting wood, expressed a *bywoner* family's land-hunger:

Dan is ons so goed as trekvoels omdat ons ons eige herberg nie het nie. So woon ons dan op die sin grond en dan op daardie sin. Moet op elke plek uit ons eie sak bou, en

55 PTA, VWN, SW67, 3, 1259, 1 May 1939. The language of these letters often have regional inflections. The blend of Afrikaans with some Dutch elements, together with idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation, contrasts strongly to the writing of middle-class women at the time, and suggest authors with with some, but not much formal education.

56 *Ibid.*, 2, 1258, 25 April 1938.

57 *Ibid.*, 3, 1259, 21 Aug. 1939.

58 *Ibid.*, 1, 1258, 3 May 1937.

59 PTA, LDB, R1513, 3, 1484.

net so's ons een of 2 jaar op so 'n plek woon en die net mooi ope gewerk het en skoon gemaak het, moet ons maar weer koers vat Ons hoor en sien van so bai wat die regering al gehelp het; en sal daar dan nie bij die regering ook vor ons ontferming wees nie ... ons lewe bai swaar net deur dat ons nie grond van ons eigen het nie...⁶⁰

[So we are just like migrating birds because we don't have our own place. Thus we live on this one's land and then on that one's. On every place we must build ourselves, and then in one or two years, just when we have cleared up nicely, we must move again We hear and see so many already helped by the government; and could the government not then also have mercy on us ... we have a very hard life just because we don't have our own land...]

Government officials almost always replied to such requests, but often with directions to apply elsewhere for help. Women requesting clothes were invariably referred to local magistrates and welfare organisations - in many rural villages, this meant the ACVV. Requests for stock were referred to the Land Bank, and queries about land was sent to the Department of Lands where the settlement schemes were administered.⁶¹ It is unlikely that many of these latter requests were successful, as a limited number of settlers were accommodated on the schemes.

If Mrs van Wyk's question regarding the successive disasters suffered by her family has to some extent been answered, aspects of her story that touch on some of her own experiences prompt the historian to ask additional questions. Why did she look after livestock as a child? What work would Mrs Van Wyk have done after she married? Was her experience of child-bearing exceptional? In short, what were the particular experiences of white Afrikaans women in the rural Cape - how did the economic changes from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s shape their lives?

60 PTA, VWN, SW67, 2, 9 May 1938. Her letter was answered, but with no offer of land. A second letter was referred to the Department of Lands.

61 It was unfortunately impossible to trace the outcome of individual cases beyond this point.

3. From Wood to Iron Yokes: Women's Work and Childbirth in the Rural Cape

My vader kom van Riversdal
hy eet sy kos met bord en al
My ma is 'n boervrou fris en sterk
kan bees inspan en skaap bewerk...⁶²

Perhaps the choice of women's narratives as a central source in reconstructing poor whites' rural past already foregrounds females' gendered experience. In fact, feminist historians have suggested that for men, whilst 'affected by the social construction of gender ... gender has been an unmarked category'. But women rarely tell their stories without referring to the dynamics of gender:

Women's personal narratives are, among other things, stories of how women negotiate their exceptional gender status both in their daily lives and over the course of a lifetime. They assume that one can understand the life only if one takes into account gender roles and gender expectations...⁶³

However, I have already discussed the interviewer/author's role in constructing such a narrative - her interest in women's gender status will crucially shape a woman's telling of her story. In fact, it is the very interaction between directive questioning, the subject's self-awareness of how the allocation of gender roles has shaped, enriched or limited her life, together with the gendered nature of language itself that may enrich the historian's narrative and analysis. Sensitivity to this play then serves to illuminate female experience and, sometimes, forces revision of preconceived ideas about female experience and agency.⁶⁴

In her essay 'Marxism, Feminism and Southern African Studies' Belinda Bozzoli compares the effect of the penetration of 'merchant capital' and colonial conquest on African societies to the effect that the spread of a cash economy had on Boer society. By the early twentieth century, the central role that African women occupied in agricultural production had been

⁶² Nuwe FAK Sangbundel (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel 1961), p.93. This example of Afrikaans 'folk' verse derives its humour from juxtaposing a father who consumes, and a mother who produces food. Because contemporary English lacks handy terms for erstwhile housewifely tasks like cutting up and preparing meat from a slaughtered sheep, the translation of *platteland* Afrikaans is somewhat awkward: 'My father comes from Riversdale/ he eats his food with plate and all/ My mother is a farmwife big and strong/ can harness oxen and 'process' sheep...'

⁶³ Personal Narratives Group, *Interpreting Women's Lives*, p.5.

⁶⁴ For a discussion of feminist research methodology and issues of power and control when women interview women, see Pamela Cotteril, 'Interviewing women: Issues of Friendship, Vulnerability and Power', *Women's Studies International Forum* 15, 5/6 (1992). See also Sherna B. Gluck and Daphne Patai (eds), *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

intensified by the encroachment of colonial rule on traditionally 'male' spheres of labour and the effect of migrant labour. Boer women, however, had never occupied as central a role, and 'their labour was ... largely located around the household itself'.⁶⁵ Bozzoli draws on the Carnegie Commission's report to support her argument that '(i)nstead of undermining *male* labour the spread of commodity exchange relieved the Boer woman of certain of her tasks.' Further, '(s)chool and church took on educational functions while health services became available to mothers giving birth and rearing children'.⁶⁶

Moreover, 'in the case of the Boer woman ... the lightening of the domestic load was accompanied by a different form of pressure - that of class formation'. She contrasts the development of black, specifically male migrant labour to patterns established in Boer society, where 'whole families entered the towns from an early date' and where the daughters of impoverished Afrikaner families were often the first to do so. Quoting the Carnegie commission, she argues that this was because the domestic economy was not making full use of their labour. In contrast to African societies, 'Boer society *lacked* the capacity to subordinate the labour of its women - perhaps a reflection of greater female strength'. Bozzoli points to the irony that 'weak and subordinated' women in black societies who shoulder a large part of agricultural and domestic labour are 'protected from proletarianisation for longer' while 'relatively stronger' Boer women, whose position within the household is 'alleviated by the spread of the cash economy [are] torn from the land much more rapidly, and forced to enter the industrial proletariat from the earliest times'.⁶⁷

However, while Bozzoli based her argument on Rothmann's book, she misreads the latter's ideal type depiction of gendered labour division in the 'civilised' family that function in a 'real community' for a summary of her research findings. In fact, Rothmann's findings emphasised the isolated situation of many white, rural Afrikaans families.

Bozzoli's argument also oversimplified a more complex and drawn-out process of impoverishment and eventual proletarianisation that affected women on the Cape *platteland* in specific ways. Women's economic circumstances were crucial determinants of the extent and nature of their work load. Poor white families' prolonged resistance to proletarianisation meant that no rapid transition occurred from farmer's wives running the homestead to *fabrieksmeisies* (factory girls) running machines.

65 B. Bozzoli, 'Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9, 2 (1983), p.152.

66 *Ibid.*, p.153.

67 *Ibid.*, pp.153-155.

Because the spread of a cash economy into rural areas was slow and hesitant - so that barter systems persisted in large sections of the Cape *platteland* as late as the 1930s - the spread of commodities lightening domestic labour was also slow and uneven. As Bozzoli herself mentions in passing, it was some time before such change penetrated to the more remote parts of the Cape. As late as 1929, housewives in the tiny Namaqualand hamlet of Kamieskroon had to make 'alles self ... ook die onderwyser se vrou; self slag en bak, vir hout en water sorg' ['everything themselves ... the teachers' wife as well; slaughters and bakes herself, and sees to firewood and water'].⁶⁸ With inadequate transport and long distances to towns and markets, similar conditions must have prevailed through much of the northern interior in the 1920s and even in the 1930s.⁶⁹

More importantly for a study of rural impoverishment, domestic work for women on the wrong side of the class divide remained arduous even in regions with an established cash economy. If the successful eastern Cape farmer's wives of the 1910s, or their Ceres counterparts of the 1920s, had more time on their hands because of new commodities, this was not true of their struggling neighbours and the impoverished sojourners on their farms.

Not surprisingly, an important determinant of women's work was ownership of land. Women from land-owning families mostly employed servants and worked at the homestead itself. 'Nee kyk, 'n ma het by die huis gebly. En kyk, daardie dae het almal 'n bediende gehad. Want die bediendes het omtrent niks verdien nie' ['no look, a mother stayed at home. And look, those days everyone had a servant. Because the servants earned almost nothing'] remembered Johanna Rossouw (born 1911) of her mother's days on a farm near Moorreesburg in the Karoo.⁷⁰

But *bywoner's* wives often shouldered a large and varied burden of work. 'Ek het 'n vreeslike flukse ma gehad. En daar is niks wat sy nie kon gedoen het nie' ['I had a very hard-working mother. And there was nothing that she couldn't do'] remembered Kate Beukes. Her mother, who had eight children by 1923, employed no domestic help. She did

68 USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (2), Garies 33, p.4.

69 Kotze's study of the cash expenditures of 'farming families' in *Namakwaaland* (pp.158-163) concluded that in the late 1930s, most families in this region lived largely from home-grown food. 84 per cent of families engaged in farming spent less than £2 each per month on food, while the other 16.5 per cent spent between £2 and £4. In this impoverished region, about 50 per cent of families living on farms spent about £2 per month on food, but they could not supplement this with home-grown food or meat from their own stock.

70 Interview with Mrs J.M. Rossouw, Cape Town, 4 Oct. 1991.

all her washing at the river ('sy's verskriklik presies met haar wasgoed gewees' ['she was extremely pernickety about her washing']) and cooked on an open fire like all but the very rich. She did all the mending and much else besides:

Alles, alles self. En as my pa gedors het, die end van die jaar. Dan daar sorg sy, hy't nooit nooit het hy nodig gehad om rond te val dat hy, hy't nie 'n sak om sy goed in te gooi nie. Sy lap hulle. Sy lap die een sak met die ander sak, sit sy so tussen die klomp sakke so in die huis, en dan sit sy die sakke lap. Pa het altyd gesê, dan sê hulle dan, jy's so gelukkig? Dan seg hy nee, my vrou sorg daarvoor. Sy lap die sakke. En sy, sy was maar sewentien jaar toe sy getroud is.⁷¹

[Everything, everything herself. And when my father threshed, at the end of the year. Then she saw to it, he never never had to look around, he never lacked bags for his things. She mends them. She mends the one bag with the other bag, sitting in-between the heap of bags in the house, then she sits mending the bags. Pa always said, when they said to him, you're so lucky? Then he said no, my wife looks after that. She mends the bags. And she, she was only seventeen years old when she married.]

The family's clothes were all home made. (As her mother would say to the relative who owned one of the farms where they stayed, 'ja Boeta, ons is arm. Maar my kinders se rokke wat hulle by die huis draag ken hulle nie op 'n Sondag nie. Hulle draag dit nie op 'n Sondag nie...' ['yes Brother, we are poor. But the dresses my children wear at home, they don't know those on Sundays. They don't wear them on Sundays...'])⁷²

In Johanna Rossouw's land-owning family, women from her mother's generation never worked outside their home.

Nee, daardie mense het *nooit* buite die huis gewerk nie. Nee, dit was nou nie 'n ding wat - daai oumense se vrouens het nooit uit, ander werk gedoen nie. Kyk nee hulle was net 'n moeder en 'n moeder was hulle. Al daardie oumense.⁷³

[No, those people *never* worked outside the home. No, it was not something that - the old folk's women never worked outside, never did other work. Look no, they were just mothers and mothers they were. All these old folk.]

But Mrs Van Zyl's mother was a dressmaker, and Kate Beukes' mother worked hard to supplement their sharecropping income. She rarely earned cash: she exchanged eggs and butter at farm or village stores - 'dan verkwansel ons [dit] nou vir uie, vir suiker, vir koffie, en vir kerse, en vir vuurhoutjies, en sulke goeters jy weet' ['then we exchanged it for onions, for sugar, for coffee, for candles, and matches, and such things you know']. Once she worked at a farm shop in exchange for fabric to make clothes: 'en dan nou ja daar vir

71 Interview with Beukes.

72 *Ibid.*

73 Interview with Rossouw.

daardie geld wat sy moet kry, dit vat sy materiaal. En dan koop sy dit en dan maak sy vir ons rokke' ['and then well for that money that she should get, she took fabric. And then she bought that and she made us dresses'].⁷⁴

The older girls often looked after their younger siblings because 'Ma het baie maal het sy by die grootbaas gaan werk Huiswerk. Koskook, vleis, broodbak, vleis bewerk ... as hulle nou die dag geslag het, dan kry Ma 'n stuk vleis' ['Ma often she went to work at the big boss's place.... House work. Cooking, meat, baking bread, processing meat ... when they slaughtered, then Ma got some meat'].⁷⁵

Perhaps the poorest and most vulnerable women were those who, like Mrs van Wyk, were semi-literate, owned no land and were widowed. Mrs du Plessis' fortunes declined when her husband lost his hand and could no longer do 'spanwerk' (wage-work in teams). For a while he herded sheep - when he became too ill with cancer her washing and ironing supplemented his disability grant. After his death she 'het mense opgepas, ek het 'n ou oom gepas, eers 'n ou tannie en toe 'n ou oom' ['looked after people, I looked after an old man, first an old woman and then an old man'].⁷⁶

The work done by poor white girls and women within the family nucleus often ranged beyond 'traditionally' female domestic duties. Many families who still possessed some livestock or had limited access to land could not afford to employ labourers. In fact, survival demanded that all family labour be harnessed, and girls frequently did *manswerk* (men's work) alongside their brothers.

Rothmann's research for the Carnegie commission showed that from the late nineteenth century women from poor families often did back-breaking farm labour, although few women worked on the land after marriage. By the 1910s - when more share-croppers had lost their struggle remain on the land - this was seemingly less common in the eastern Cape and Riversdale/Albertinia.⁷⁷

74 Interview with Beukes.

75 *Ibid.*

76 Interview with Mrs M. du Plessis, 16 March 1992. Welma Stockenstrom vividly enters into the life of such a rural caretaker of the old and sick in her novel *Abjater Wat so Lag* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1991).

77 USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (5), Klaarstroom, Prince Albert.

But women from poor *bywoner* families who still farmed in the Riversdale/Albertinia districts of the 1920s worked on the land. Kate Beukes recalled that until they left the farm in 1925 her mother also helped with planting and harvesting when the family worked together. As a girl Kate did heavy farm-work - 'by die dorsmasjien het ek ook gewerk, net soos enige mansmens moes ek kaf wegsleep vir die masjien ... en ons moet gaan nog skool ook, ons moet nog leer. ook' ['At the threshing-machine I also worked, like any man I had to haul chaff for the machine ... and we still had to go to school, we also had to study']. In fact the older daughters regularly worked on the land:

Want ... my ma het vier dogters gehad, toe't sy eers 'n seun gehad ... ons het gehelp vir Pa skoffel, en plant, Pa maak die gaatjie, ons steek die patatrank in of ons gooi die mieliepit of ons gooi of ons. Of as ons pa ploeg, dan loop ons agter die ploeg, en dan gooi ons die pitte so agter ... en dan sê Pa as Ma nou so, dan word hy so hartseer as hy nou sien ons staan so en werk saam met hom, maar hy kan nie anders.

[Because ... my mother had four daughters, then only did she have a son ... we helped Pa weed, and plant, Pa made the hole, and we put in the sweet potato cutting or threw in the mealie ... Or when Pa ploughed, then we walked behind the plough, and then we threw the grains behind ... Pa became so sad when he saw Ma, saw us working like that with him, but he couldn't manage otherwise.]

Mrs Beukes remembered that even women from families who owned some land did similar work:

maar al die meisiemense het maar daar gewerk ook wat tuinery - die eie boere, die wat eie, wat hulle eie plekke het, het net so die vroue gewerk. Hulle het skape opgepas en al daai soortvan dinge moes hulle doen.

[but all the girls worked like that also with gardening ... the farmers that had their own, their own places, the women worked just like that. They herded sheep and all those kinds of things they had to do.]

Judith Jacobs was the youngest daughter of a landless *trekboer* family who lived in a wagon while they moved between Karoo farms. Her father had no workers, and she herded sheep until they settled in Laingsburg when she was twelve. Judith later contradicted her son's suggestion that this was a shameful task fit only for coloureds. But her memories of working during pubescence were harsh:

Ek het swaar groot geword ou pël ... sê my seun eendag vir my hy sê maar Ma, dis mos 'n skande want dis mos hotnot se ding. Ek sê ja, in die Karoo was dit nie so nie. Daar moes ek berge op en berge af My pa het nie om gegee as jy daardie maandstonde het nie. As ek opstaan eendag is ek so siek. Ek was skaam om te sê wat my makeer. Hulle het nie eers omgee dat jy siek is nie ... ek sal my vyande dit nie toewens nie, my lewe nie Jy moet loop ... ek moet voor sonder by die huis wees. Jong my pa het nie toegee meisie of iets nie die sambok is reg.⁷⁸

[I had a hard time when growing up old pal ... once my son said to me but Ma, isn't that a disgrace because that's a hotnot's job. I said yes, in the Karoo it wasn't like that. There I had to climb up and down mountains My father didn't care whether you had those periods. Sometimes when I got up I was ill. I was too shy to say what was wrong. They didn't even care that you were ill ... I would not wish my life on

78 Interview with Mrs J. Bailie, Ysterplaat, 18 March 1992.

my worst enemies You had to go ... I had to be home before sundown. My father did not make concessions for being a girl, the sjambok was ready.]

Such work was usually characterised as 'manswerk' - clearly, herding sheep or cultivating the land was still thought of as properly done by men.⁷⁹ But in some regions, a considerable amount of arduous labour was expected of women. In parts of the Karoo, Namaqualand and the northern Cape districts, tradition also had it that 'vrouewerk is bokwerk' ['women's work is goat-work'].⁸⁰ As goats often made out a sizable part of farmers' livestock, women shouldered much responsibility.

For the most part, *bokwerk* (goat-work) was apparently accepted as inherently women's work, 'glo maar volgens die aard van die work' ['apparently because of the nature of the work'] as one farmer's wife put it.⁸¹ But Rothmann added a wry comment:

Hierdie antwoord is byna algemeen, van mans en vrouens; meer dikwels van die mans, wat 'n mens laat dink dat die vrouens die antwoord van die mans geleer het. Jan Maas se vrou, Boesmanland, sê byvoorbeeld 'sou dit wees miesies - ek weet nie - maar sou dit wees dat die mans lui is?'⁸²

[This answer is quite common, from men and women; more often from the men, which makes you think that the women learnt this answer from the men. Jan Maas's wife, in Bushmanland, says for example 'could it be, madam - I don't know - but could it be that the men are lazy?']

Women who excelled in *bokwerk* were also respected and sought after. While she spoke dismissively of her lazy sons, *Tant* (Aunt) Sannie Goosen from Kleinsee proudly described her daughter-in-law, Sannie Bloukop, as an 'uithaler boer' ['outstanding farmer'].⁸³

In the late 1920s, all available family labour was still being harnessed in places where struggling farmers had not yet lost all access to land. Northern Cape women still did 'ander

79 Some Karoo farmers' wives took a lively interest in the business aspect of farming. In 1929, the Carnegie interviewer noted somewhat disapprovingly that Hessie van der Mescht concentrated on the farming enterprise instead of on her children's education. When asked who decided to buy a flock of goats on the day of the ostrich feather market's collapse in 1914, *Tant* Hessie's amused answer was - 'Nee, ek het 'n baie goeie man, maar hy weet niks' ['No, I have a very good husband, but he knows nothing']. (USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (2), Willowmore 3, pp.18 and 20.)

80 M.E. Rothmann, *The Poor White Problem in South Africa. Report of the Carnegie Commission, Part V: The Mother and Daughter of the Poor Family* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932), p.197.

81 USDC, MER, 55.M.3(2), Garies 36, p.53.

82 *Ibid.*

83 *Ibid.*, Garies 29, p.42.

plaaswerk' - heavy farmwork not specifically thought of as women's work. A teacher's wife from Namaqualand reported

gevalle ... waar die vrou op die land staan met haar man en werk, en hy het drie groot seuns. Sy verkies dit so. 'n Ander geval: dogters ploeg en saai - doen 'kêrelmanskwerk'.⁸⁴

[cases ... where the woman stands on the land and works with her husband, he has three grown sons. She prefers it like that. Another case: daughters plough and sow, do 'young men's work'.]

As late as 1938 a study noted that struggling farmers who could not employ (black) shepherds or farm workers ('plaasbediendes') often made use of family labour. Girls, boys and wives were observed to herd stock, sow and harvest.⁸⁵ The Noltes were doing fairly well on their smallholding in the 1930s - 'ek het nooit op die erf gewerk nie, my man het altyd, hoe sal ek sê, kleurlinge gehuur' ['I never worked on the plot, my husband always, how shall put it, hired coloureds'].⁸⁶ But Annie Nolte remembered that other women in Kenhardt of the 1930s 'het gewerk. Party het voor die - tou gelei en die grond gehelp sleep' ['worked. Some went in front of the - ploughed and helped clear the soil']. Magriet Abel, resident in Upington from the 1930s, remembered how women with small children did backbreaking work, alongside their men:

Ja, o nee die vrou was die handlanger! Nee die vrou was die handlanger! As daar 'n voor, kyk ek onthou van mense waar 'n drinkbak gemaak is, 'n drinkbak is gemaak van sement. En dan's die vrou die handlanger. Sy's net die handlanger. Die kinders is nog te klein. Hulle weet ook nie hoe nie. Die babetjie gaan saam met haar, die babetjie gaan - hy lê daar in 'n skaduplekke lê hy maar. En sy doen alle aandra werk, jy weet sodat die man nou maar kan aangaan met die dinge. Ek onthou van 'n vrou, mense wat so van die plaas afgekóm het hiernatoe en vir wie 'n man wat nou 'n grondeienaar was, hy't vir hulle 'n stukkie grond gegee, en hoe hy nou die grond bewerk het, en sy vrou Bettie het maar net meeste mores saamgegaan ... en dan het die babetjie het net saamgegaan, en Bettie het gaan toulei, want nou moet dit geploeg word...⁸⁷

[Yes indeed, the woman was the helper! No the woman was the helper! When, look I remember people making a watering-trough, a watering-trough is made from cement. And then the woman's the helper. She's always the helper. The children are still too small. They don't know how to manage. The baby goes with her, the baby goes - it lies there in the shade. And she does all they carrying, you know so that the husband can get on with it. I remember a woman, people who came from the farm here, a man who was a landowner gave them a bit of land, how he worked on the land, and most mornings his wife Bettie came along ... and then the baby just went along, and Bettie did the ploughing...]

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Garies 36, p.54.

⁸⁵ Kotze, *Namakwaland*, p.170.

⁸⁶ Interview with A. Nolte, Upington, 19 June 1990.

⁸⁷ Interview with M. Abel, Upington, 17 June 1990.

If some white Afrikaans women were still doing heavy farm work by the late 1930s, rural women's experience of childbirth changed even more slowly. The women Rothmann interviewed often had smaller families than did their mothers. Still, many families were large and pregnancies tended to follow in quick succession. Contraceptives were virtually unknown in rural areas - Namaqualand parents who were questioned about their use in 1938 'het een en almal hul verbasing te kenne gegee om te hoor dat iets dergliks wel bestaan' ['one and all expressed surprise on hearing that such a thing existed'].⁸⁸ The interviewers probably asked the wrong question, although women familiar with abortifacients would hardly have passed their knowledge on to male sociologists. Abortion had long been a method of birth-control, and was probably still practised in spite of official disapproval. However, most women did not have the option to terminate pregnancy without some danger to their health.⁸⁹

Childbirth was also a difficult and even traumatic experience for many women in the rural Cape. An old woman's telling description of transition from girlhood to married life in the late nineteenth century applied to many of her later counterparts: '(t)oe het ek die houtjuk afgelê, en die ysterjuk aangesit' ['then I put aside the yoke of wood, and put on the yoke of iron'].⁹⁰ For this wage labourer's daughter, hard work on the land and care of siblings was followed by marriage to a *trekboer* who soon turned to wage labour. Poverty and a nomadic life-style dictated the circumstances in which fifteen children were born: with rudimentary shelter and sometimes in total isolation.

In the Cape's more isolated northern districts of the 1910s and 1920s, professional birth attendants were hard to come by, for rich and poor alike. Many women were tended by mothers or mothers-in-law, others engaged 'ou vrouens' ['old women'] who charged for their services. But if class position was a crucial determinant of the extent and nature of women's productive labour, this also determined the circumstances of reproductive labour. Whether women could rely on family networks, 'lay' midwives or qualified doctors for help

88 Kotze, *Namakwaland*, p.69.

89 H. Bradford, 'Her Body, her Life': a Hundred Years of Abortion in South Africa' (paper presented at Conference on Women and Gender in South Africa, 1991). Also CA, A1953, 2/3, 8, 'Regulations with regard to persons practising as midwives'.

90 USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (2), 'Aantekeninge oor besoeke aan gesinne in Namaqualand', 1929, p.8.

often depended on access to land. Women who were often on the move, whether married to nomadic farmers, wage-labourers or sharecroppers, were less likely to have access to the skills of older family members, and were often too poor to afford 'old women's' services.

Moreover, in the northern Cape and the Karoo, where women's work extended beyond arduous domestic labour in isolated homesteads to farming with goats, it was hardly possible to take time off after birth. Rothmann's cryptic notes hinted at impoverished women's painful experience of pregnancy and childbirth whilst working to survive. A nomadic farmer's wife who lived in tin shacks on rented fields was chronically ill after the birth of twelve children and five miscarriages. She rarely rested for more than five days after giving birth, and after miscarriages '[het] selde eens gaan lê' ['seldom even lay down'].⁹¹ In the more economically developed districts of the Cape, the poorest women also combined hard work with constant pregnancies. A woman from the Little Karoo, who was married to a shepherd, probably suffered less than her mother who had twenty-one children, most of whom died young. ('Ma lê nog in die kooi, dan sterf hulle al.' ['Ma still lay in bed when already they died.']) But her nine children were also born in harsh circumstances. One child was born while she looked after cattle, 'onder 'n kar by die dorp' ['under a wagon close to town']. She gave birth to others on sackcloth 'so agter 'n bos, of in 'n hut of 'n tent' ['behind a bush, or in a hut or a tent'].⁹² In 1911, Judith Jacobs was born on the trek under a thorn tree: 'God my ma kon nie help nie. Sy kan nie in die wa inkom nie' ['God my ma couldn't help it. She couldn't get into the wagon']. Judith's mother cut the umbilical cord herself.⁹³

Rothmann's study of 1929 showed that women still suffered similarly. The data she collected until the mid 1930s does not show whether the Depression had an impact on women's experience of childbirth. As more families lost access to land, women's experience of pregnancy and birth were probably more harsh than previously - although for many poor whites, help had always been out of reach.

During the 1930s, many Afrikaans women in the rural interior of the Cape still regarded birth as a 'natural' event that only rarely called for the intervention of professionals. The support of midwives or family members was sometimes preferred to the attentions of a doctor; the latter was often only called when things started to go seriously wrong. This was

91 *Ibid.* , 55.M.1.K.7, M.E. Rothmann to J.H. Conradie, 25 Oct. 1931.

92 *Ibid.* , 55.M.3(5), Prince Albert 14.

93 Interview with Bailie.

not only because of lack of money, but because of the support that familiar women could provide. In Namaqualand, professionally untrained midwives were referred to in terms that indicated respect for their knowledge - *Tant* Sannie Goosen's mother was a `vername groot vrou' ['a famous great woman']. In 1929 a woman from tiny Soebatsfontein in the north-western Cape explained her preference for female `lay' doctors to Rothmann:

[ek] is bang vir 'n hospitaal: nee, ek sê dit reguit, misies; en ek is bang vir 'n dokter ook. Ek laat nie somar aan my vat nie: ook nie vir my kaal uittrek nie. Onse ou doktersvrouens doen dit nie, hulle werk behoorlik met 'n mens.⁹⁴

[I'll be frank madam, I'm afraid of a hospital and I am also afraid of a doctor. I don't just let people touch me: also not strip me naked. Our old doctor-women don't do that, no, they treat one properly.]

Annie Nolte, the daughter of a road inspector and `lay' midwife from a hamlet in the northern Cape, married a road worker who squatted on government land (and was soon given legal rights to farm). She was tended by a nurse when her first child was born. But when her second baby was due in 1934 she did not think it was worth the trouble:

My tweede seuntie, toe hy gebore is, toe het ek 'n ouma sommer daar uit die rante uit geloop haal. En sy't vir my gekom help in jest no time was alles verby. Baie gou. Baie maklik. Ag wat jong, daai dae was ons nie so verfynd gewees dat ons nou juis met 'n hospitaal - ek het nooit in 'n hospitaal gekom nie. ek ken glad nie so iets nie.⁹⁵

[My second son, when he was born, then I just got me a granny from the hills. And she came and helped me and in just no time everything was done. Very quick. Very easy. Oh well, you know, those days we were not so refined that we actually needed a hospital - I never got into a hospital. I don't know such a thing.]

Magriet Abel, married to a railway employee in Upington when her first child was born in the same year, was emphatic about the trust women had in lay midwives. Birth was a natural event that rarely warranted the attention of doctors:

Ja, O ja, baie vertrouwe gehad, en weet jy, *baie* min babas het hulle verloor, hulle het baie min babas verloor, en ek onthou nog hier was vroeër jare 'n Dr. Galgut, 'n Jood, en hy het baie graag saam met Mevrou Davis gewerk. Hy het gesê, sy het vir hom wenke gegee wat hy nie, nou nie geweet het nie. En dan ... hy het altyd gekom as Tant Lenie vir hom roep, dan't hy gekom want dan't hy geweet daar is nou 'n probleem. Maar daar was nie vir haar sommer elke dag 'n probleem nie. Ek weet nie of daar minder moeilikhede was toe - maar ag jy weet geboorte was 'n doodnatuurlike ding. Dit was 'n doodnatuurlike ding.⁹⁶

[Oh, had lots of trust in the midwives, and they lost very few babies, and I remember there used to be a Dr Galgut, a Jew, and he used to work very willingly with Mrs Davis. He said she gave him tips that he, he never knew ... he always

94 USDC, MER, 55.M.3(2), Garies 6, Soebatsfontein, p.35.

95 Interview with Nolte.

96 Interview with Abel.

came when Aunt Lenie called him, then he came, because then he knew there was a problem. But there wasn't often a problem with her. I don't know whether there were fewer problems - but well, you know, birth was as completely natural thing. It was a completely natural thing.]

But Abel's description of birth as *doodnatuurlik* [literally, 'dead natural'] was perhaps more appropriate than she intended, given the high mortality rates in the countryside of the 1930s. As Rothmann's Carnegie research suggest, economic necessity often dictated that women only turned to doctors as a last resort. Many women's choice of midwives as birth attendants were related to higher fees charged by doctors. But Mrs Van Wyk made sure that she was within reach of a doctor for the birth of her first child. As Abel's story also suggests, rural women were beginning to accept that medical men had superior skills to be called on in the case of difficulties.

The attentions of midwives steeped in local tradition were in fact often inadequate and even dangerous. In the early 1930s, northern Cape midwives still believed that washing a woman before ten days after childbirth was dangerous, and tied the (uncut) umbilical cord to the patient's legs whilst waiting for the afterbirth 'anders trek dit na binne' ['otherwise it is pulled inside'].⁹⁷ When, in 1929, her daughter went into labour, *Tant* Miena from the north-western Cape was familiar with the uses of a 'warm pot':

'Toe ek daar kom was die kind al klein; die moeder was nog op die vloer, maar die kind was al klein. Toe het ek en hulle daar gehelp maar die nageboorte wou nie kom nie.'

'En Watter rate het tante toe gebruik?'

'Nee, ek het toe nie geweet van heuning nie; nou sê hulle dis so 'n afdrywende ding. Maar oens het haar ander goed ingegee. En tot vier maal hat ek haar op warm pot laat sit met 'n bietjie brandewyn daarin, maar ek was bang want sy het so gavloei. Toe was die dokter laat haal, en hyt het toe gakom en dit weggehaal...'⁹⁸

[Aunt Mina: 'When I arrived the child was already born; the mother was still on the floor, but the child was already born. Then I helped them there but the afterbirth would not come.'

Interviewer: 'And what remedies did Aunt use?'

Aunt Mina: 'Well, I did not know about honey then; now they say it is such an expelling thing. But we made her drink other things. And four times I made her sit on a warm pot with a little brandy in it, but I was frightened because she bled so. Then the doctor was sent for, and he came and took it away.']

When Mrs Dippenaar (the *trekboer*'s wife staying in a paraffin-tin shack in Soebatsfontein) went into labour with her tenth child, seventy year old *Tant* Hessie was summoned. During the night the old woman, who could not see very well in the badly lit shack, took fright and called the teacher's wife:

97 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.7, M.E. Rothmann to J.H. Conradie, 25 Oct. 1931.

98 USDC, MER, 55.M.3(2), Garies 31, p.46.

Toe Mev. S. daar kom lê Mev. D. op die vloer, haar voete half by die deur uit ... die kindjie was gebore, lê eenkant toegemaak, 'heeltemal slap al'. Die naelstring is afgesny sowat 5 duim lank en vasgebind, met een omslagknoop, daar is 'n hele plas bloed. Die moeder lê hulpeloos en instruksies gee aan Tant Hessie waar sy verder benodigdhede vir die kindjie moet kry...⁹⁹

[When Mrs S. arrived Mrs. D. lay on the floor, her feet almost outside the door ... the child was born, it was wrapped and lay at one side, 'already completely limp'. The umbilical cord had been cut at about 5 cm and tied, with one knot, there was a whole pool of blood. The mother lay helpless, giving instructions to Aunt Hessie to get other necessities for the child.]

Part Two: Moving to the City

1. Working Class Life in Cape Town, c.1918-1939.

While many landless families still struggled to make a living on Cape farms and in rural villages, others were opting for a new life in the province's coastal cities. The sons and daughters of many small-town residents interviewed by Rothmann in 1929 already lived and worked in Cape Town or Port Elizabeth.¹⁰⁰ As *bywoner's* daughter Kate Beukes explained of her family's decision to give up farming in 1925,

Ons het gekom om te kom werk in die Kaap. Dis wat ons voor gekom het. Kyk, daar's toe al baie mense op die plaas weg, mense wat hulle eie grond het en alles, wat op die plaas weg is, die kinders om te kom werk in die Kaap. En hulle het ook nie in winkels gewerk of in kantore nie. In fabrieke.¹⁰¹

[We came to Cape Town in order to work. That's what we came for. Look, many people had already left the farm, people who had their own land and all, who had left the farm, so that the children could work in the Cape. And they did not work in shops or offices. In factories.]

Many Afrikaans whites from the Cape *platteland* tried their luck on the Rand, and many others followed the railways to Port Elizabeth in the eastern Cape.¹⁰² But Cape Town's

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Garies 11, pp.27-28.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (5), Prince Albert 1, 4, 6, 7.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Beukes.

¹⁰² Grosskopf, *Rural Impoverishment*, pp.6-7, 62. According to Grosskopf 'numerous Cape districts ... suffered an absolute decrease of rural population since 1921.' Many people who left the Cape *platteland* went to the Free State and especially the Transvaal: the Cape had a net loss of 118 181 or 19% of whites born in this province to other provinces by 1926.

In 1916, Port Elizabeth's Dutch Reformed Church council also noted that because of drought 'great numbers' of whites had inflated its membership - 'de arme blanke kwesie [is] ernstiger geworde in ons midden' ['the poor white question in our midst has become more serious'] (CA, DRC, RA1/8, 1916, Port Elizabeth, p.827).

population also grew rapidly. Between the census counts of 1911 and 1921, the city's white population increased by some 30% to more than 100 000, with a large influx occurring after the *bittere droogtes* (bitter droughts) of the late 1910s (the total population was 220 500).¹⁰³ Many newcomers to Cape Town came from surrounding western Cape districts, but others from further afield. Maitland, a rapidly expanding industrial area, had its own church with a largely white working-class membership by 1912 - five years later its DRC was reporting a 'buitengewone toestrooming van Hollandsprekende' ['exceptional influx of Dutch speakers'].¹⁰⁴ By 1918, the Cape Town (central) DRC minister's already customary comments on the numbers of poor whites moving in from the countryside were sounding a new note of alarm at the 'steeds toenemende instrooming van blanke armen' ['the ever increasing influx of poor whites'] into Woodstock, a poor inner-city suburb close to the harbour and factories.¹⁰⁵ In 1920, church elders repeated that 'trots alle waarschuwingen is daar nog gedurig een toevloed van armen' ['in spite of all warnings the poor are still flooding'] into Woodstock and nearby Salt River.¹⁰⁶

Cape Town's growing white wage-working, self-employed and unemployed population entered a city with distinct working-class and 'slum' districts. Although not segregated by state decree, Cape Town also had a distinct and changing racial geography.¹⁰⁷ At first (in the 1910s and early 1920s) most Afrikaans whites moved into inner-city areas - Woodstock

103 The census statistics provided for Cape Town between 1911 and 1936 are difficult to compare and even contradictory. Sometimes, municipal boundaries circumscribed 'Cape Town'; at other times electoral divisions were used. 'Rural' and 'urban' areas are also delineated differently in successive reports. I have used statistics provided from the 1921 and 1936 census reports (including numbers for 1911) that apply to 'greater Cape Town' - this includes the municipal areas of Wynberg and Simonstown.

104 CA, DRC, RA1/9, 1917, Cape Town, p.342.

105 *Ibid.*, 1918, Cape Town, pp.936-7. Ministers commented on the arrival of Dutch speakers from the countryside from about 1912. (CA, DRC, RA1/7, 1912, Cape Town, pp.236-6; CA, DRC, RA1/8, 1916, Cape Town, pp.639-40.) H.C. Hopkins provides a history of Cape Town's DRC congregations in *Die Moeder van ons Almal* (Cape Town: NG Kerk Uitgewers, nd c. 1965). By the early twentieth century, the Groote Kerk or 'mother' church's congregation existed alongside a few younger congregations. The Nieuwe Kerk near the central city and Wynberg had already been established as separate congregations by the mid-nineteenth century; Green Point followed soon after. The Observatory congregation was founded in 1912. By then, Woodstock (called Papendorp) had its own minister; it became a separate congregation in 1923.

106 CA, DRC, RA1/10, 1920, Cape Town, p.279.

107 See O.J. M. Wagner, *Poverty and Dependency in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1936) for a map indicating where 'European' and 'non-European' recipients of the Board of Aid lived.

and Salt River - with a resident population of poor people and a fair number of 'coloured' families, and next to more predominantly 'coloured' and 'Malay' areas.¹⁰⁸ From the late 1910s the northern, semi-rural municipality was also gaining many Afrikaans speakers: between 1917 and 1926, membership of Parow and Goodwood's DRC grew from 400 to over a thousand. Many moved from Salt River and Woodstock, and most of the men were working on the railways.¹⁰⁹ By the mid-'20s, many whites were also moving from inner-city areas eastwards towards the Cape Flats. From the early 1930s, many working-class families moved into the newly established sub-economic housing schemes for whites in Ysterplaat near the Maitland industrial area. The Cape Flats were dotted with the shacks of the very poor. (As an erstwhile social worker recalled: 'wat nou vandag Mitchell's Plain en daai groot streek was, was toe al's bosveld gewees. Wild ... En dan kry jy nou daar die heel swakstes - almal blankes. Nee ons het nie-blankes ook ...' ['what is today Mitchell's Plain and that big area, was then all veld. Wild ... And there you found the poorest - all whites. No we also had non-whites ...'])¹¹⁰ Northern areas like Parow and Goodwood were now rapidly expanding residential areas with a large working-class population.¹¹¹

108 As Saunders points out in 'Putting the History of White Poverty in South Africa on the Agenda' (p.244), studies of white attitudes towards poverty and of the poor in Cape Town during the nineteenth century 'did not focus on the white poor as such, in part because the poor were not readily identifiable by colour'. It is difficult to know to what extent a self-identified 'white' class of poor people already existed in Cape Town before significant numbers of poor whites moved in from rural areas. V. Bickford-Smith's contribution to the volume edited by Wilmot James and Mary Simons, *The Angry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989) provides some clues. In 'A special Tradition of Multi-Racialism'? Segregation in Cape Town in the Late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', Bickford-Smith argues that by the middle of the nineteenth century, a *de facto* segregation or 'separation between white and black institutions' had replaced the 'vertical relationship of white over black' that had been characteristic of slavery. In Cape Town of the 1880s, 'residential integration, combined with social intermingling' apparently characterised working-class areas such as Districts One, Six and Woodstock. Working-class children, 'coloured' and white, inter-mingled in mission schools. Cape Town's dominant class 'believed in white supremacy' and practised social segregation to prevent the upward mobility of 'other than whites'. But their economic power was derived from rent, banking and commerce: they were not large-scale employers of black labour and did not implement residential segregation for the city's working class in the late nineteenth century. However, by the 1890s concern was increasingly expressed about the 'deserving' white poor. The DRC and the state established segregated schools for whites in lower-class districts, and the railways reserved apprenticeships for whites. Even so, Bickford-Smith argues that multi-racialism as a 'lower-class phenomenon' continued to survive 'in truncated form' by the 1900s, and in some social activities, areas of employment and residence by 1911.

109 J.A. Heese, *Gedenkboek van Parow-Moedergemeente 1917-1967* (Elsiesrivier: Nasionale Handelsdrukkery, nd c.1967), p.37.

110 Interview with E. du Toit, Paarl, 28 Sept. 1989.

111 Heese, *Gedenkboek van Parow-Moedergemeente*, p.70.

DRC marriage registers provide some clues to the range of work done by the Afrikaans inhabitants of Cape Town's inner suburbs. For some years after the South African War, occupations of newly married men living in Woodstock and Salt River ranged from gardeners, labourers, wagon drivers, firemen, and butcher's assistants to wagonmakers, smiths, printers and carpenters. A few were also tramguards, 'engineers' and overseers at the railways. From about 1910, the number of South African Railways employees increased steadily. By the next decade few old-style craftsmen remained; many young men worked for the railways at jobs requiring varying levels of skills.¹¹² As Mrs Driver explained, 'weet jy daardie dae was die spoorweg maar die mense, die organisasie wat baie mense vorentoe gelaat kom het' ['you know those days the railways were the people, the organisation that enabled many people to get ahead'].¹¹³ Those with few initial skills could work their way up: 'Jy beginne as 'n stoker. En dan is jy 'n drywer. En as jy nou vir jou opwerk, dan is jy 'n voorman, en dan naderhand is jy 'n loodsvoorman' ['You begin as a stoker. And then you are a driver. And if you work yourself upwards, then you are a foreman, and eventually you are a shed foreman'].¹¹⁴

Many newcomers found work in Cape Town's growing industries. From 1914, the measure of artificial protection provided by the First World War boosted the growth of the city's

112 CA, DRC, G13/21 (Cape Town DRC, Woodstock ward marriage register) 1900-1922; G94/11 (Woodstock DRC), 1924; G13/12 (Cape Town DRC, Observatory ward), 1900-1912; G190/4/1 and G190/4/2 (Observatory DRC), 1912-1927. By 1905, the occasional railways 'overseer' signed his name in the city's DRC marriage registers. Others were policemen and firemen. In 1910, a 'signalman' and 'stoomketelmaker' (boilermaker) also registered their marriages in Observatory. By 1914, the names of a porter, a 'shunter', a few engine drivers, some 'platelayers', 'engineers' and railway officials were recorded (about 25 per cent of newlyweds). Very likely, several labourers who signed their names also worked for the railways. Some ten years later a large percentage of skilled and semi-skilled men (a third of all names in the Woodstock register) worked for the railways. A postman, lockmaker, hairdresser, shoemaker and some bricklayers also registered. Throughout this period very few men worked in factories.

113 Interview with Driver. Half of the thirty men who married in Observatory in 1932 were employed by the railways, most were labourers, boilermen and cleaners and drivers. Others were postal delivery men, nurses, factory workers and bus conductors. One was self-employed as a cabinet maker. Women's occupations were not listed (CA, DRC, G190 4/5, Observatory DRC Marriage Register, 1931-34). Most DRC marriage registers only recorded husbands' occupations, but for an interesting exception, see the Parow DRC register for 1933 - 1937 (CA, DRC, G90 5/1), which has fairly precise records of the variety of work done by women upon marriage (age was always recorded). Factory workers included weavers, packers at a tobacco factory, workers at biscuit and shoe factories and 'masjieniste' at garment factories. Others were nurses, shop attendants and telephone operators. A few were dressmakers and housekeepers.

114 Interview with Rossouw.

manufacturing sector, particularly the garment factories. The number of industrial workers grew from 11700 before the war to reach a total of almost 32 000 as the post-war boom reached its climax. Some 40% of the labour force was white, and many new workers in Cape Town's factories were Afrikaans *plattelanders*.¹¹⁵

The following three years saw a decline in industrial employment, but by 1924/5 it had recovered to 34 000.¹¹⁶ Seemingly, relatively fewer Afrikaans speakers were moving to the city - from 1925, the DRC still reported newcomers to the congregation, but were more preoccupied with an influx of 'kleurlinge en oosterlinge' ['coloureds and easterners'] into Woodstock and their consequent (according to the DRC) loss of loyal congregation members to other suburbs.¹¹⁷ However, from the beginning of the First World War and especially after 1925, rapidly growing number of female workers in Cape Town included many whites.¹¹⁸

From the 1930s, depression and drought contributed a new stream of poor people into Cape Town. By 1931 the city's white population was 151 000. The 1936 census counted 23 000 more whites out of a total population of 344 200. Church elders reporting on the well-being of their white and Afrikaans constituency placed much emphasis on poverty, unemployment and the difficulties of keeping track of poor people constantly on the move. But like their colleagues in the western Cape's larger towns, DRCs also reported on the arrival of newcomers seeking work in the city:

115 Martin Nicol, 'A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers in Cape Town, 1900-1939' (Ph.D. thesis, UCT, 1984) pp.71-5. Nicol drew his statistics from successive Industrial Census reports. The major industrial sectors were food and drink, metal and engineering, clothing and building, and the area covered is the 'Cape Peninsula' and 'Cape Western'. More specific figures for Cape Town are not available.

116 Nicol, 'A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers', pp.71-2.

117 CA, DRC, RA1/13, 1925, Cape Town, pp.740-41.

118 Nicol, 'A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers', pp.75-77. Between 1904 and 1908, 8 per cent of Cape Town's tiny industrial labour force was female. By 1916/7, 1300 of 4500 female industrial workers were white. (While in the rest of the country women made up 10 per cent of the labour force, 28 per cent of Cape Town's industrial workers were women by 1918). Between 1925 and 1938, the average rate of growth for the employment of white women in Cape Town was 10 per cent per annum. By the latter year, 13 200 women worked in industry; just under half were white (*ibid*).

Die toevloed van talle van ons geloofsgenote van die platteland na die spoorweg- en werksinkels, die polisie, en die talryke industriële ondernemings, beklemtoon ook die noodsaaklikheid van die werksaamhede van ons kerk...¹¹⁹

[The influx of many of our fellow believers from the rural areas to the railways and workshops, the police service, and the numerous industrial practices, emphasises how crucial our church activities are...]

Land-owning families who chose to move to Cape Town for reasons not directly related to economic need could settle quite well into a new, sometimes semi-rural existence. When Mrs Retief's father 'retired' from their Karoo farm in the early 1920s, he kept some cows and horses and bought a plot in Parow on the rural outskirts of the city:

Dit was Tiervlei se kant jy sien. Want kyk daar was die groot gronde wat jy kan gekoop het. Daar't my pa gekoop en daar't ons gebly. My broer het toe oorgegaan Parow se kant toe, vir skool en dit. Dis al skool wat daar gewees het toe. En die kerk ook. Ons kerk was ook gewees Parow se kerk, die moederkerk.¹²⁰

[It was to the Tyger Valley side you see. Because see there were big plots that you could buy. There my father bought and there we lived. My brother then went over to Parow's side for school and so on. There was only the one school then. And also the church. Our church was also Parow's church, the mother church.]

Poorer people also sometimes moved to land close to Cape Town. A policeman's daughter from Grikwastad and her Cape Town born husband moved from Kimberley to Johannesburg's working-class suburbs, then tried their luck at the 'delwerye' ['diggings'] and finally, in 1918, bought six acres of land near Zeekoevlei outside Cape Town. Mr Verster combined work as a carpenter with selling vegetables to 'n Slamse man, hy't 'n groot wa gehad ... hy't sy wa gelaai met groente, die't hy gevat direk na die mailboats wat daai jare in die Kaap gekom het van Engeland' ['a Malay man, he had a big wagon ... he loaded his wagon with vegetables, he took them directly to the mailboats that came to the Cape from England in those days'].¹²¹ Asked when they first moved to Zeekoevlei, Laura Groenewald (Verster's daughter) added: 'Ons was die eerste blanke inwoners wat nou by Zeekoevlei was ...' ['We were the first white inhabitants of Zeekoevlei...']¹²²

119 CA, DRC, RA1/15, 1931, Paarl, p.460; *ibid.*, Rondebosch, p.569; Woodstock, p.701; RA1/16, 1933, Maitland, p.370; *ibid.*, Nieuwe Kerk, p.446; Rondebosch, p.584; Woodstock, p.738; Worcester, p.743; RA1/17, 1934, Woodstock, p.790; Worcester, p.794; Maitland, p.411; Cape Town, pp.298-9.

120 Interview with Mrs W.A. Retief, 12 Aug. 1991, Cape Town.

121 Interview with Mrs L. Groenewald (born Verster), 25 Oct. 1991, Cape Town.

122 Interview with Mrs L. Groenewald, 15 Aug. 1991.

Other families gave up farming entirely to join Cape Town's wage-earning population. Ivy Swart's family moved from a small-holding near Oudtshoorn to Bree Street in the city centre. Asked if there were 'lots of houses at the time' she recalled the changing racial composition of the area and her family's reaction:

toe was dit nie so liederlik soos dit nou is nie, dit was almal witmense. Almal daai dae was almal, almal witmense langs mekaar gewees en lekker saam gewoon. Maar nou toe lateraan het dit 'n bietjie verander. En toe't ons ook maar geskuiwe na beter dele toe. En, al hoe laer af het bruinmense ingekom hulle het kom woon daarso. So ons het opgetrek en hulle het afgegaan, en hulle het ingekom... ¹²³

[then it wasn't as ugly as it is now, it was all white people. Everyone those days were all, all white people next to each other and enjoyed living together. But then later it changed a bit. And then we also moved to better areas. And, coloureds kept moving in lower and they came to live there. So we moved up and they moved down...]

In Swart's family, the grown children soon worked in factories and shops. Other landless families who came to Cape Town combined wage-work with attempts at self-employment. At the suggestion of a relative who owned a drapery shop in Salt River the Rossouw family moved to Cape Town in the early 1910s. An illiterate cart-driver from the western Cape district of Wellington, Mr Rossouw (*see plate 13*) worked as a vegetable hawker and occasionally made leather stirrups ('Dis al wat hy kan doen'; 'hy't mos nooit gaan werk nie. Hy't net vir homself gewerk.' ['That was all he could do'; 'He never went to work. He worked for himself.']) His grown children soon worked at the railways, in shops and factories. The family lived in industrialising Woodstock 'amper teen die spoor, daar by Pyotts ... die biscuitmense in Soutrivier, Woodstock' ['almost next to the railways, there by Pyotts ... the biscuit people there in Salt River, Woodstock']. They kept a few horses (on nearby Paardeneiland) and chickens in the backyard. Their street had 'coloureds' living opposite - 'n hele ry vol. Hulle het niks vir ons gepla nie' ['a whole row full. They never bothered us']. But in 1918, so many of their impoverished opposite neighbours died from influenza that her father decided to move. 'En daar het sommer waens vir hulle kom haal, sommer in 'n sak gesit. En dit was seker te veel vir my pa. Hy't nie daarvan gehou nie En as hy nie hou daarvan nie, dan moet jy trek' ['And wagons came to fetch them, put in a bag just like that. And that was probably too much for my father. He didn't like that And if he doesn't like it, then you must move'].¹²⁴ The family next stayed in Rosebank

123 Interview with Mrs I. Swart, Cape Town, 18 Oct. 1991.

124 Interview with Mrs F. de Waal Wileman (born Rossouw), Ysterplaat, 31 Oct. 1991. The questions posed were: 'En hoekom het, hoekom het u getrek of weet u nie?' ['And why did you move or don't you now?'] The response was 'Ja nee, kyk oorkant ons het kleurlinge gebly...' ['Yes, look across from us stayed coloureds...'], followed with the explanation of how their dying of 'flu prompted the family to move. A second question, 'het dit vir u ouers nie gepla dat, sê nou maar bruinmense ook in die straat woon nie?' ['did it not bother your parents that, let's say brown

(`en toe't ons na Observatory se kerk gegaan' ['then we went to Observatory's church']), then Athlone (`toe was dit nog baie blankes' ['then there were still many whites']), and finally, in the early 1930s to the sub-economic housing scheme for whites in Ysterplaat.¹²⁵

Ivy Swart, Francina Wileman and Laura Groenewald moved to the city with their families. But for many white Afrikaans women who grew up as the daughters of sharecroppers or nomadic farmers, transition to adulthood coincided with moving alone to Cape Town. The route to the city was often indirect. In 1925, the father of Kate Oosthuyzen (later Beukes) decided to look for work, `het alles verkoop' ['sold everything'] and moved to the forestry settlement at Franschoek in the western Cape. Eighteen year old Kate soon left for Cape Town - `op my eie self het ek toe maar stad toe gekom' ['I then came to the city all by myself'] - to find work. As with many others, the move was softened by support from relatives already living in Cape Town. Ivy Swart had also commented on this network of support from relatives already in the city: `jy weet my ooms en tantes se seuns of dogters wat ook kom werk het in die stad, dan't hulle maar altyd by ons kom bly, kom loseer sal ek sê, tot lat hulle goeie werk gekry het ...' ['you know the daughters and sons of my uncles and aunts who also came to work in the city, then they always came to stay with us, lodged with us, until they a good job ...']¹²⁶

The journey of Mrs Driver was more solitary. She left her impoverished family as a fourteen year old in 1925, to live with a lawyer's family in nearby Caledon. `(E)k was *nooit* weer daar nie. Omrede ek afskeid geneem het van, van al die swarkry' ['I *never* went back there. Because I left behind all the, all those hard times']. Although she recalled being `soortvan onder beskerming gebring ... natuurlik ek was soos 'n kind by hulle in die huis' ['sort of given shelter ... of course I was like a child in the house'] she had no more schooling. She certainly earned no money, `maar die vooruitsig was daar, ek kom weg, en ek kom onder ander, ek sien ander dinge en so aan' ['but the prospect was there, to get away, to be amongst others, to see other things and so on']. A few years later she left to look for work in Cape Town: `toe kom ek Kaap toe. Toe't ek nou lus vir 'n verandering. Groot verandering. Hoe oud was ek? Dit weet ek nie. Ek kan nie onthou nie. Ek het net gesê ek gaan weg. Ek gaan 'n ander heenkome soek...' ['Then I came to Cape Town. Then I wanted a change. Big change. How old was I? I don't know. I can't remember. I just said

people also lived in the street?' elicited the explanation that `Nee maar daai bruinmense was nie soos nou nie' ['No but those brown people were not like today'].

125 *Ibid.*

126 Interviews with Beukes, Swart.

I'm leaving. I'm looking for another way to make a living...'] Mrs Van Zyl, the comparatively well-off *bywoner's* daughter from Swellendam, gave two years of 'privaatonderwys' ['private tuition'] on farms. In 1937 she left for Cape Town to study nursing.¹²⁷

On her way to her central city office in 1922, Rothmann marvelled at the irrevocable change signalled by crowds of women hurrying to work.¹²⁸ Girls from more well-to-do families were mostly absent from the throng. The erstwhile landowner's daughter from Parow finished high school and 'het nie eintlik buite die huis gewerk en dit nie' ['didn't really work outside the house'].¹²⁹ The daughter of a railway employee living in Goodwood also explained that the women of her family never needed to work: '... my pappie het genoeg verdien om vir ons almal te sore' ['my daddy earned enough to look after all of us']. Her sisters did work at a printer's shop, although 'hulle het nie nodig gehad om te gaan werk nie, maar mammie sê hulle het maar aangehou, hulle wou ook gaan werk om mooi klere en goed te koop' ['they didn't need to work, but mommy said they kept on about it, they wanted to work so they could buy pretty clothes and things'].¹³⁰

Most girls from working-class families didn't have the luxury of choice. They were expected to leave school, often before their final year, and work until they married. Those who finished ten years or more of schooling sometimes found office work. Francina Rossouw completed standard eight and worked in a furniture shop's office from 1925. 'Ek het gedoen tik en snelskrif en boekhou. En ek het nog briewe moes vertaal ook.' ['I did typing and shorthand and bookkeeping. And I also had to translate letters.']

In the 1920s and 1930s, growing numbers of white Afrikaans women also worked in Cape Town's shops and factories.¹³¹ Ivy Swart recalled of her first years in Cape Town: 'Ons

127 Interviews with Driver, Van Zijl.

128 *Die Burger*, 'Briewe van 'n verplante boervrou', 10 Oct. 1922.

129 Interview with Retief.

130 Interview with Mrs S. Geldenhuys, Cape Town, 2 Aug. 1991.

131 See Erika Theron's *Fabriekwerksters in Kaapstad* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1944), for a wealth of material on 'white' and 'coloured' female factory workers. For example, Theron notes that just less than half of the white factory workers she interviewed came to Cape Town as young children together with their parents. About half came to the city as young, unmarried women looking for work. The majority of the latter group came on their own, although several already had siblings or relatives in the city. Most of the women came directly to Cape Town from districts in the western Cape. The largest group of women were between 16 and 20 years old; the second largest

[susters] is toe almal al in die werkstadium gewees. Maak nou nie saak wat se werk dit gewees het nie, maar ons het gewerk. Toe't ons nou nie sulke deftige werke gehad nie ...' [¹³² We [sisters] were then all at the working stage. Didn't matter what work it was, but we all worked. Those days we didn't have such smart jobs ...] Her sisters worked in shops, and she in a small clothing factory in the city centre. 'Ek het 'n cutter gewees Die patrone uitgelê en dit gesny met die elektriese masjien' [¹³³ I was a cutter Laid the patterns out and cut them with the electrical machine']. The factory only employed white workers: 'daai dae het hulle nog nie kleurlinge ingeroep nie' [¹³⁴ those days they hadn't called in coloureds yet']. Kate Oosthuyzen soon found work at a biscuit factory in Woodstock 'ook maar vir 'n appel en 'n ei...' [¹³⁵ for a pittance']. When her family joined her in Observatory/Salt River a few years later, her ever-industrious mother worked at a drapery business. A number of white Afrikaans women were also finding employment as domestic workers in the 1920s.¹³² As a young woman in the late 20s, Mrs Driver first worked as waitress in a boarding house. She then worked for various families as a live-in domestic ('huishulp') until she married.¹³³

For women who started work in the depression years of the early 1930s, finding a job was harder. Many factories reduced their working hours and dismissed workers; for some time, Kate Oosthuyzen had a part-time job selling booklets of shopping vouchers instead of factory work.¹³⁴ But Laura Versveldt (daughter of the Zeekoevlei family) left school with standard six in c.1936 and found work in a clothing factory:

Ek moet toe maar werk, want daardie jare was die geld ook maar bietjie skaars. Dit was soortvan die depressie ook gewees daai jare, en mens het nie so maklik werk gekry nie, maar toe moet ek toe maar uitgaan en gaan kyk wat ek nou kan doen. En een geluk het ek toe werk gekry by Monex hemde fabriek.¹³⁵

[I had to work, because those years money was as bit scarce. It was sort of the depression in those years, and you didn't find work so easily, but I had to go and see

group was between 21 and 25 years old - together, these two groups made up 72 per cent of the sample. Only 5 per cent were older than 35. 25 per cent of unmarried women had left school before standard six; 59 per cent had standard six certificates and 12 per cent had reached high school.

¹³² See Chapter Four, footnote 167.

¹³³ Interviews with Wileman, Swart, Beukes and Driver.

¹³⁴ Records of the ACVV's Salt River hostel for female factory workers provide interesting statistics (CA, A1953, 2/35, 133; 2/9, 49. Also PTA, VWN, SW69/17, 474). In 1931 and 1932, frequent reference is made to shortened working hours, retrenchments and the matron's efforts to find work for the women. By 1933, the matron reported that more work was available than previously, but erratic working hours were still mentioned in later reports. The home towns of women are also provided - most came from areas close to Cape Town and the rural western Cape (Theron provides a map with similar information in *Fabriekswerksters*).

¹³⁵ Interview with Groenewald.

what I could do. And one piece of luck I then found work at the Monex shirt factory.]

She received 'top wages' of £1 5s. a week for being 'in besit van die collar seksie. Ek het van die collar uit die cutting-room uit kom, totlat hy na die laundry toe gaan, het ek met die collars gewerk. Die hele lengte van die fabriek...' ['in charge of the collar section. I worked from when the collar left the cutting-room, until it went into the laundry, I worked with the collars. The whole length of the factory...'] Maria Stamroodt, whose *trekboer* father quit farming because of drought and worked for the Kenhardt municipality, completed high school and left rural Namaqualand in 1935. Friends who had earlier left for the city had offered to help her find a job, and she counted herself lucky to find employment as a shop assistant:

Daar was nie werk op die platteland nie. Daar was in die stad ook omtrent nie werk nie. Jy as jy 'n werkjie kry, dan gryp jy dit en hou dit vas, met altwee jou handjies, sodat lat jy dit nie kan verloor nie ... Ek dink Wellington Fruitgrowers is die eerste werk wat ek gedoen het. Ek kan nie onthou nie - nee ek het niks ander werk gekry nie...¹³⁶

[There wasn't work on the *platteland*. There was also scarcely any work in the city. If you found a job, you grabbed it with both your hands so that you wouldn't lose it ... I think Wellington Fruitgrowers was the first job I had. I can't remember - no I didn't find any other work...]

If poor families on the land had harnessed all available family labour, Afrikaans working-class parents likewise expected their children to work for the family's welfare. Young women (and men) who had earlier worked on the land to help their families survive now contributed to the family income by wage-work until they married. The eldest of seven children, Maria Stamroodt always sent money home: '... ek het altyd my verantwoordelikheid gevoel, ek moet vir hulle stuur, al is dit ook net 'n pond 'n maand of ek koop vir hulle iets en stuur vir hulle dit' ['... I always felt my responsibility, I had to send them money, even if it was just a pound a month, or I bought them something and sent it']. Young women from families who lived in Cape Town mostly lived at home until they married and gave their mothers a portion of their wages. Francina Wileman (then Rossouw) was fifteen when she started earning for the family - £3 of her £4 monthly salary went to her mother (*see plates 14 and 15*). Her brothers, railway workers, also contributed to the family budget - and eventually bought their parents a house in Ysterplaat, a new white working-class suburb.

Mrs Retief's father looked after 'all of us', but it was accepted that grown children from working-class families supported their parents. As Francina Wileman put it, 'Nee, hulle't te

136 Interview with Stamroodt.

veel kinders om op te pas dat hulle nog gaan werk nie! Nonsens. Waarvoor is ons dan daar?' ['No, they had to look after too many children to also go to work! Nonsense. Why else were we there?'] As Ivy Swart also remembered, 'Ons het gewerk en hulle het die geld van ons gevat, daai dae moes die kinders gewerk het vir die ouers' ['We worked and they took the money from us, those days children had to work for parents']. Kate Oosthuyzen (who lived with her family after they moved to Cape Town) earned 10s. a week at the factory

en dan moet ek nog my ma ook geld gee, want my pa het ook maar min geld. Kyk ons was 'n klomp, en die kleintjies die gaan nou almal skool. Dan gee ek vir my ma ... dan hou ek my twee sjielings, dan gee ek die ander vir Ma.¹³⁷

[and then I also had to give my mother money, because my father also had little money. See, we were a large family, and the little ones all went to school. Then I gave my mother ... then I kept my two shillings, and gave the rest to Ma.]

And Laura Groenewald (born Versveldt) remembered how her mother would collect the money she earned. 'My ma soos gewoonlik staan bo by die Stadsaal en wag vir ons om te kom, en ek kom toe aan ... Maar ons het nooit ons geld oopgemaak nie, ons moet dit net so gegee het vir my ma...' ['my mother as usual stood there by the City Hall and waited for us to come, and I arrived ... But we never opened the packets of money, we had to give it just like that to my mother...']¹³⁸

While better-off families employed domestic servants, newly proletarianised Afrikaans families often divided all domestic duties amongst the women (and girls) of the household. Mrs Retief's mother (married to the erstwhile landowner living in Parow) was 'maar net 'n huisvrou gewees' ['just a housewife']. To some extent, domestic work was still labour intensive - like many Afrikaans women, she made the family's clothes. She also sold butter from the family's few cows. But her daughter didn't have many domestic duties ['as ek gekan het, het ek vir haar hand gegee en dit' ['when I could I gave her a hand']) because she had a servant.¹³⁹

The Verster family employed workers on their smallholding, and the children were never involved with the gardening: 'Pa ... het vir [die bruin mense] elkeen 'n stuk grond gegee wat hulle kan bewerk, daar tuin maak vir hulle huisgesinne' ['Pa gave the brown people each a bit of land for their use, to garden for their families']. Laura's mother, who had left the DRC for the Salvation Army as a young woman, could employ help and pursue her own, church-related interests:

137 Interview with Beukes.

138 Interviews with Stamroodt, Wileman, Beukes (born Oosthuysen) and Mrs Groenewald.

139 Interview with Retief.

En ons het kar en perd gehad, en my ma het die offisiere loop kry by Plumstead, en dan gaan hulle die hele dag gaan hulle vir huisbesoek doen. So ons het 'n ou wit dame gehad sy was baie arm. 'n Mevrouw Siebertsen. En sy het vir ons maar meer toe ons nou kleiner was het sy nou vir ons opgepas. My ma het altyd maar meer met die kerk werk besig gewees ... sy't nie veel op die plaas gebodder nie.¹⁴⁰

[And we had a cart and horse, and my mother went to meet the officers at Plumstead, and then they went to do house-visits the whole day. So we had an old white lady she was very poor. A Mrs Siebertsen. And she when we were smaller she looked after us. My mother was more busy with the church work ... she didn't bother much with the farm.]

But the large Rossouw family never employed domestic servants. Work in the family was also strictly divided by gender: Francina's mother stayed home, did housework, cooked and cared for the children. Her father 'het nie eers geweet om koffie te maak nie. Nee hy sê sy werk is buite, my ma se werk is binne. Sy moet na die kinders kyk en alles omsien' ['didn't even know how to make coffee. No he said his work was outside, my mothers's inside. She had to care for the children and look after everything']. Work divisions for siblings also followed gender roles that cast females as domestic workers: 'die seuns het niks gedoen nie' ['the boys did nothing']. Asked if her mother was satisfied with this, Francina Wileman affirmed:

O ja! Ja, my ma is 'n - dis 'n vrou se werk, nie die man se werk nie. Nee, die mans het niks daarmee te doen nie. Daar's genoeg meisiemense in die huis om dit te doen. Hmm-mmm, die mans het net kom aansit en eet. En verder gaan maak wat hulle wil.¹⁴¹

[Oh yes! Yes, my mom was a - it was a woman's work, not a man's work. No, the men had nothing to do with that. There were enough girls in the house to do that. Hmm-hmmm, the men only sat at the table and ate. And further did what they pleased.]

The work necessary to run a household at minimum cost was divided amongst the girls. Francina (the youngest) left school after she passed standard eight, while her sister Magrieta ('Max') left a year earlier to work. None of the children earned money whilst going to school, but 'intussentyd van dertien of so kan mens mos al huiswerk doen!' ['meanwhile from thirteen or so you can of course do house-work!'] As a ten-year old, she already had her allotted tasks: 'Ek en my ouer suster het soggens die wasgoed gewas ... ek moet nou skool toe gaan en sy gaan werk toe Maar ons het die wasgoed gedoen. Sy't die vloere en goed gedoen' ['My elder sister and I did the washing in the morning ... I had to go to school and she to work ... but we did the washing. She did the floors and so on']. An elder sister 'het nooit gewerk nie' ['never worked'], did housekeeping and looked after their

140 Interview with Groenewald.

141 Interview with Wileman.

their aging parents (*plate 16*). All the girls could sew (they never bought clothes), but Francina's sister who worked in a hat-making factory made most garments for the family. Older siblings looked after the younger ones:

Ons het nooit [bruinmense] gehad nie. My suster ook nie, ons het almal vir ons self. Die oudste suster van my, kyk sy't ook elf kinders, en as hulle nou, sê sy's nou ses en die ander enetjie is twee, dan het sy al begin oppas, want die ma het al die werk...¹⁴²

[We never had coloureds. Neither did my sister, we all did by ourselves. My eldest sister, look she also had eleven children, and when they, say she's now six year's old and the little one is two, then she already started to take care of, because the mother had lots of work...]

After marriage, work-loads were likewise determined by financial circumstances. Most women who married in the 1930s stopped working 'outside the house'. Mrs Geldenhuys married when she was eighteen - her husband was 'chief engineer' at a factory and 'het goed verdien' ['earned well']. She stayed at home and 'het altyd ook 'n goeie bediende gehad' ['always had a good servant'].¹⁴³ Many women also gave up their jobs - although some, like Francina Wileman who married when she was 'nou daar amper by die dertig' ['almost thirty'] continued to work until they fell pregnant. (She would work again a few years later, after she divorced her philandering husband). Johanna Rossouw gave up her shop-assistant job when, at twenty-five, she married a farmer's son who worked on the railways: 'ek het 'n man gehad wat nie daarin glo lat 'n vrou werk nie. Daai dae het, as jy 'n vrou is, het jy nie meer gewerk nie' ['I had a husband who didn't believe that a wife should work. Those days, if you were a wife, you no longer worked'].¹⁴⁴

But Mrs Driver, who left her job as a live-in domestic as a twenty-one year old when she married a delivery man, still had to struggle to make ends meet. 'Vroëer dae was dit baie swaar, algemeen. Jy het nie, daar's nie geld nie, mense verdien amper niks nie, baie min' ['Those days it was very difficult, generally. You didn't have, there was no money, people earned almost nothing, very little']. In her house on the new sub-economic housing scheme for white working-class families in Ysterplaat, she worked hard to help support her family:

Ek het nie uitgewerk of so nie. Nee, ek het naaldwerk vreeslik baie klere gemaak. Dit het ek wel gedoen. Nou dit het ook sommer vanself gekom. Ek was nie geleerd om dit te doen nie ... my tyd was in my naaldwerk opgesluit. En my huishouding.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Interview with Geldenhuys.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Rossouw.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Driver.

[I didn't go out to work. No, I did sewing made lots of clothes. That I did. Now that just came of itself. I wasn't taught how to do it ... my time was locked into my needle work. And my household.]

Like other women whose husbands earned small salaries, Mrs Driver never employed domestic help: `Niks. Niks nooit, nooit, nooit, ek het nie nodig gehad nie. Ek kon dit ook nie bekostig nie. [Om die waarheid] sê dit so. Ek kon nie 'n huishulp bekostig nie' [‘Nothing. Nothing never, never, never, I didn't need it. I could not afford it. [To tell the truth] put it like that. I couldn't afford a domestic’].

Kate Oosthuyzen married at twenty-five, soon after she helped her road-working husband (who used to farm) find a job on the railways through the National Party. She stopped working, and had occasional help from `volgies' [‘coloured folk’] asking for food with household tasks in a Goodwood house without electricity or an inside tap. But unlike Francina Wileman's parents, the couple did not regard house-work as woman's work. Kate Beukes explained her husband's virtue and devotion by recalling his enthusiasm for domestic tasks:

O hy was goed. Ek het 'n goeie, my kind ek het - ek weet nie - ek kan nie jou vertel nie, hoe 'n goeie man ek had nie. Ek was alles in sy lewe gewees. Ruite gewas, vloere gepolish, wasgoed gedoen, die man, my man. O hy't my baie gehelp, baie, baie, baie. En ek het my werk ook gedoen, ek het sy kinders groot gemaak vir hom. Ek het hulle swaar grootgemaak. Hy't nagdiens gedoen...¹⁴⁶

[Oh he was so good. I had a good - my child, I can't tell you how good a husband I had. I was everything in his life. Washed windows, polished floors, did washing, that husband, my husband. Oh he helped me lots, lots, lots. And I also did my work, I brought his children up for him. And it was hard bringing them up. He did night duty...]

The recollections of landless and poor rural women showed that in the 1920s and 1930s, many still had several children and that birth was often traumatic because only minimal help was available. Women from working-class families in the city were comparatively better off. Some of the first-generation Capetonians who married in the 1930s had as many children as the *platteland* women of Rothmann's study. But like many of their rural contemporaries, they also had fewer children than their mothers. The chief engineer's wife had nine children (‘daai tyd kon ons nog nie gekies het nie’ [‘those days we couldn't yet choose’]). Kate Beukes had six children (to her mother's twelve). Mrs Wileman, who was soon separated from her husband - first by war, then by divorce - had two children and Mrs Driver four.

146 *Ibid.*

City women who could afford private medical care still stayed at home for childbirth. As Mrs Retief recalled of her difficult and only experience of childbirth:

... ek het nie na 'n nursing-home toe gegaan nie, ek het uit my huis dit gehad. In my ma se huis is my kind gebore. En Dr. Lugt was my dokter gewees en hy't sy verpleegster gebring. Ek het 'n, ek het 'n moeilike geboorte gehad...¹⁴⁷

[... I didn't go to a nursing-home, I gave birth at home. My child was born in my mother's house. And Dr. Lugt was my doctor and he brought his nurse with him. I had a, I had a difficult birth...]

Mrs Wileman had her second child at home with the help of a trained midwife, for the first (in 1941) she went to a nursing-home 'want ek was toe al oor dertig gewees' ['because I was already over thirty']. Women who could not afford to pay could also make use of district nursing services. But on the outskirts of Cape Town of the 1920s and 1930s, women without formal training still attended births. Laura Groenewald recalled that although her mother had no formal training she was midwife to 'vernaamlik die blanke persone wat daar naby ons gebly het' ['mainly to the white persons who lived near us']. No nurses and doctors were close by - moreover, 'in daai jare het die mense maar so outomaties kraam oorgeneem' ['in those days people just automatically assisted at childbirth']. But Laura's own mother had a trained nurse for at least one birth, and an anecdote suggests that women who called in untrained help were often poor:

Een familie het gewees, want die vrou sy't amper elke jaar of jaar en ses maande het sy 'n baba gehad. En sy het, hulle het in 'n sinkhuisie gebly. En dan kom die man oor, dan seg hy vir my ma, hy sê 'Suster, sal Suster maar oorkom, want ons reken Dorothy begint nou met die besigheid.' Dan gaan my ma oor. Nou hulle het 'n klomp kinders gehad. Dan sien ek die hele streep kom, 'gaan maar na Laura toe'. Die hele streep kom. En dan maak ek 'n bed op die vloer vir die hele klomp van hulle...¹⁴⁸

[There was one family, almost every year or year and six months the woman had a baby. And she, they lived in a tin shack. And then the husband came over, then says he to my mother, he says 'Sister, can Sister come over, because we reckon Dorothy is starting with the business.' Then my mother went across. Now they had a lot of children. Then I would see the whole line of them coming, 'you go to Laura now'. They come one after the other. And then I make up a bed on the floor for the whole lot...]

147 Interview with Retief.

148 Interview with Groenewald.

2. Narrative, Experience and the Construction of Identity

Putting 'into print the words of people usually rendered invisible to history is itself an important project. Here, the lives of poor Afrikaans women - stories that have thus far remained untold - have been recorded. But Joan Scott points to the shortcomings of projects that aim simply to 'make experience visible' - thus precluding 'analysis of the workings of its historicity' and instead reproducing its terms. According to Scott,

some of the most ardent defenders of the need to attend to experience have been ... feminist historians seeking to install women as viable subjects, social historians insisting on the materialist basis for the discipline on the one hand and the 'agency' of individuals or groups on the other ... All seem to have converged on the argument that experience is an 'irreducible' ground for history...¹⁴⁹

Scott warns against taking 'experience' for granted as something people have; one should rather 'ask how conceptions of selves (of subjects and their identities) are reproduced.' Instead of regarding 'experience' as the 'origin of our explanation ... the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known' it should be 'that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. To think about experience in this way is to historicize it as well as to historicize the identities it produces.'¹⁵⁰ Scott thus seeks to examine 'experience' as a process of subject-construction. She quotes Teresa de Lauretis's redefinition of experience as

the process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed. Through that process one places oneself in social reality, and so perceives and comprehends as subjective (referring to, originating in, oneself) those relations - material, economic, and interpersonal - which are in fact social and, in a larger perspective, historical.¹⁵¹

Scott challenges historians to examine how individuals are constituted through experience - 'the historical processes which, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences.'¹⁵²

As with all personal narratives, these women's accounts of their working lives represent and reinterpret gendered life experience. But when rendering these narratives into 'history', the subject constituted as fixed, autonomous and a reliable source of knowledge through the process described by de Lauretis is both 'the object of inquiry - the person studied in the present or past - and the investigator him- or herself...'¹⁵³ Interviewers direct narratives

149 Joan W. Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991), p.779.

150 *Ibid.*, pp.779-80.

151 *Ibid.*, p.782. Scott is quotes from de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't*.

152 *Ibid.*, p.779.

153 *Ibid.*, p.783.

with specific questions, and responses are also subtly but indelibly shaped by an interplay of age, gender, class and cultural identity during the interview. It is this dynamic that the writer of oral history must render visible if she wants to interpret, explain - and still communicate another person's narration of past experience. In fact, one crucial aspect of this interaction is that, in the answers of those questioned about their lives, motifs only indirectly related to specific questions posed by the interviewer often recur. The reconstruction of past experience is also apparent in themes that interweave through these women's stories: poverty and respectability, race and self-identification with 'whites' against 'blacks' or 'coloureds', language, and economic survival in the urban context. An exploration of how such issues are articulated may offer valuable insight into the processes that shaped identity - in Scott's terms, how their experiences have constituted these individuals.

The culture of work articulated by women like Francina Wileman and Ivy Swart did not allow for hand-outs from charity. Their stories were narratives of hard work and thrifty respectability. Upington born Magriet Abel explained of her family that they were *blanke armes*: poor but 'altyd skoon ... het darem kos gehad en so' ['always clean ... did have food and so on']. But there were also *arm blankes* - 'die het jy nou maar gekry' ['those were also around'].¹⁵⁴ Ivy Swart explained, '... ons het nie in weelde grootgeworde nie, ons het, sal ek maar sê, spaarsamig. Armoedig en spaarsamig en netjies en skoon' '... we didn't grow up in luxury, we were, I'd say, thrifty. Poor and thrifty and neat and clean']. Francina Wileman remembered her family's threadbare existence but 'ja wat, ons het maar reggekom. Moet maar.' ['yes well, we managed. Had to.']¹⁵⁵ While she knew few luxuries as a child, she emphasised that the family's health never suffered from lack of food:

Ek onthou nog vir Kersfees het my pa, dan't hy altyd gekoop so wat hul sê 'n ballasmandjie met stukkende biscuits. Dit was nou ons Krismiskoek [lag]. Ons het nooit sulke goed gehad soos koek en soos mense nou nie, nee liewe land. Maar ons het goed oor die weg gekom. My broers is almal oor die ses voet. Nee, ons makeer niks...¹⁵⁶

[I still remember well for Christmas my father, then he always bought what they call a bushel-basket of broken biscuits. That was our Christmas cake [laughter]. We never had things like cake and like people have now, goodness gracious no. But we got on well. My brothers are all over six foot tall. No, there's nothing the matter with us...]

154 Interview with Abel.

155 Interview with Swart.

156 Interview with Wileman.

Hard work was necessary to survive and the family was too poor to save money. 'Nee, waarvoor, waar moet ek geld kry? Ek spaar nou nog nie. Ek sê altyd die Here sal voorsien, ek spaar nie' [No, what for, where must I get the money? I still don't save. I always say the Lord will provide, I don't save']. But they didn't accept outside help ('nee, ons het mos genoeg!' ['no, we had enough!']) Mrs Driver was also adamant that she never accepted charity but recognised the difference that subsidised housing made for her family:

Ek weet [die ACVV] gaan na die minderbevoorregtes toe - kyk ek het nooit hulp van niemand gekry nie - my man het gewerk vir ons bestaan. En die, die ACVV, hulle gee hulp vir die mense. dit het ek gehoor en so aan. Maar ons het natuurlik, die groot hulp wat ons gekry het was deur toegelaat te word om een van die huise te huur, jy weet...¹⁵⁷

[I know [the ACVV] goes to the underprivileged - look, I never had help from no-one - my husband worked for our living. And the, the ACVV, they help the people. I heard that and so on. But we of course, the great help we had was to be allowed to rent one of the houses you know.]

Judith Bailie (née Jacobs), the trekboer's daughter, was married to a man who earned very little before he found work at the railways. For her, help from the ACVV was welcome and unproblematic (although she was proud that her children became self-sufficient adults). Many of her neighbours in Maitland also paid monthly visits to the ACVV offices:

Ek het altyd elke maand na die ACVV toe gegaan. Was lekker gewees.... Die ACVV het baie klere vir my kinders gegee. My kinders het nie, toe hulle moet skooltoe gaan het hulle nie eers klere gehad vir skool nie. Die ACVV het gegee Hulle was baie goed, eerlikwaar vir ons. Vir almal wat hulp nodig het. Maar nou vandag.... Die kinders sorg vir hulle self, het hulle eie huise en motors.... Nee man toe ek in Maitland bly toe gaan almal toe gaan ek saam. Die eerste van die maand ... altyd elke maand ACVV toe gegaan. Dit was baie lekker gewees.¹⁵⁸

[I went to the ACVV every month. It was nice.... The ACVV gave my children many clothes. My children did not have, when they had to go to school they didn't even have clothes for school. The ACVV gave them Honestly, they were very good to us. To everyone who needed help. But today.... The children look after themselves, have their own houses and cars.... No man when I lived in Maitland then everyone went and I went along. On the first of the month. It was very enjoyable.]

In the women's narratives of moving to and living in Cape Town, references to the racial composition of a neighbourhood was a frequent motif. Of course, narratives about the past are articulated in language shaped by the social processes of intervening decades. The language in which these 'white', 'Afrikaans' women tell their stories is a peculiarly South African discourse shaped by decades in which race was a central category for political manipulation and social engineering by the state. For the women who tell stories of

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Driver.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Bailie.

childhood and youth, historical processes have also, through discourse, (re)positioned them as subjects and produced subsequent experience.

Significantly, references to race was not only frequent but also an unsolicited motif. Ivy Swart had volunteered that her family moved from Bree street when 'bruinmense' moved in, Francina Wileman referred more mildly to the 'kleurlinge' living opposite in Woodstock and 'net blankes' in Athlone. Laura Groenewald commented that they were the first whites in Zeekoevlei. A few women, asked whether white women did factory work, also commented that 'coloureds' later took jobs first performed by whites.¹⁵⁹

If some women expressed antipathy, resentment or intolerance towards people regarded as 'other' because of their colour, others conveyed attitudes of paternalism and tolerance. Asked if her parents minded coloureds staying opposite them in Woodstock, ('Het dit vir u ouers nie gepla dat, sê nou maar bruinmense ook in die straat woon nie') Mrs Wileman responded: 'daai bruinmense was nie soos nou nie. Hulle was nog 'ounooi' en 'oubaas' en sulke goed. Nee, hulle het nooit vir ons gehinder nie, ons het hulle daar gesien, en dit is ook al' ['those brown people weren't like now. They were still madam and boss and so on. No, they never bothered us, we saw them there, and that was all'].¹⁶⁰ Laura Groenewald, whose family had to sell their land when it became a 'buffer zone' under the Group Areas Act, also liked to emphasise the neighbourliness between her family and 'coloured people': 'So het ons saam met die kleurlingmense grootgeword, en ons was - ons was welbekend in Grassy Park en Zeekoevlei, van ons kleurlingmense ...' [Thus we grew up together with the coloured people, and we were well known in Grassy Park and Zeekoevlei, with our coloured people ...]¹⁶¹

Church activity (her mother's in the Salvation Army, later the Apostolics) involved charity amongst black and white alike. But she frequently used her skills with herbs to treat the sick, or organised help for tuberculosis sufferers:

Ons het in hulle huise gegaan, in hulle ou kaitjies wat hulle gehad het. Ons het vir hulle gaan gemaklik maak, gesorg dat hulle kos kry. Gesorg dat al die dinge reg gaan met hulle. Dit was ons werk. Dit het nie saak gemaak by ons wie hulle is en wat hulle is nie. Hulle was arm, ons was ook arm gewees, maar ons is in staat gewees om vir hulle te kon gehelp het. Deur die afdelingsraad kon ons vir hulle kos gekry het ...¹⁶²

159 Interviews with Swart, Wileman, Driver.

160 Interview with Wileman.

161 Interview with Groenewald.

[We went into their houses, into the little shacks they had. We made them comfortable, saw to it that they had food. Saw to it that they were all right. That was our work. It didn't matter who they were and what they were. They were poor, we were also poor, but we were able to help them. We could get them food through the Divisional Council ...]

But her midwifery activities did not extend to 'coloureds': 'ons het nie met die kleurlinge veel gebodder nie net vir die blanke' [we didn't bother much with the coloureds, just with whites']. Expressions of faith and memories of religious activity dominated Groenewald's conversation - a recurring theme was also religion and a sense of community. Asked whether her family attended political meetings, Groenewald explained the prioritising of religion over politics:

Ons het nooit gebodder [met politieke vergaderings] nie. Nee wat ons het, ons het meer belang gestel in die Christelike toewyding van ons lewe, en wat ons vir 'n ander persoon kan liewerste doen. Dit het by ons nie saak gemaak wat sy kleur was nie. Ons het, ons het baie onder die kleurlinge gewerk. Ons het godsdiens gehou onder die kleurlinge. En ons het nooit vyande gehad nie.¹⁶³

[We never bothered with political meetings. No, we were more interested in our Christian faith, and what we could do for another person. His colour did not matter to us. We, we worked a lot amongst the coloureds. We held religious meetings for the coloureds. And we never had enemies.]

Groenewald's conversation about present and past revolved around the theme of religion. As she explained, 'Ons het godsdiens grootgeword' ['we grew up religious']. Better-off families like the those of Retief and Geldenhuys were also 'baie kerk-vas' ['staunch churchgoers']. As Mrs Retief recalled, '(e)lke Sondag en elke aand en dit en ek het Sondagskool gehou' ['every Sunday and evening I held Sunday school']. She belonged to a church youth group that gathered every Sunday evening after church 'dan het ons by een se huis bymekaargekom, dan't ons daar gespeel en dit, musiek gemaak en dit en gesing ...' ['then we gathered at someone's house, then we played and so on, made music and sang ...'] Geldenhuys, whose mother was a mainstay of a society that distributed food to the poor, also recalled how religion played an important role in young people's social life. Asked where young people met their friends, she explained that 'Mammie het 'n orrel gehad. En baie jongmense het na hulle toe gekom en dan kom hulle daar en dan speel hulle en sing ...' ['Mummy had an organ. And many young people would come and then they would play and sing...']¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Interviews with Geldenhuys, Retief.

But references to religion also punctuated the narratives of Afrikaans women from wage-working families. Judith Bailie proudly remembered her husband's position of church deacon. A question about her children prompted the response that 'u kan vir almal vra. Ek was in die oggend en in die aand met my ag kinders in die kerk ... die hele bank was vol' ['you can ask anyone. Morning and evening I was in church with my eight children ... the whole pew was full'].¹⁶⁵ Francina Wileman spontaneously commented on the proximity of the church to new locations in the city. Answers to questions about division of labour in the household also suggested the central role of religious worship for 'respectably poor' people. Sundays was a special day when her mother cooked 'Sondagkos'. Asked about the family's practice of making their own clothes, she explained that one sister made most of the clothes:

En sy't nou ons kleres gemaak. En toe't ons nou weer Maitland, daardie jaar toe ons in Ysterplaat ingetrek het, was Maitland die enigste kerk wat daar was. Jy moet hiervandaan gaan in Ysterplaat ... om soontoe te gaan. En toe't sy toe ons nou daar voorgestel is, het sy ons rokke en ons hoede gemaak. Toe't ons wit crêpe de chine rokke.¹⁶⁶

[She made clothes for us. And then that year when we moved to Ysterplaat, the only church was in Maitland. You had to go from here in Ysterplaat to Maitland. And then when we were presented as members, we made our dresses and hats. We wore white crêpe de chine dresses.]

The family also held religious devotion at home ('My pa kon nie lees nie ... Maar my ma kon lees, dan't my ma gelees, dan't my pa en my ma gebid, en so aan' ['My father couldn't read ... But my mother could read, then my mother read, and both my parents prayed, and so on']). As a young woman, Francina went to choir practice and a prayer group.

Women who came from the countryside entered a city in which English dominated. As Maria Stamroodt explained,

Die Afrikaans in die Kaap, daai tyd, was hoofsaaklik Engels. Al die korrespondensies wat jy gedoen het, was ook in Engels. Daar het glad nie eens so iets bestaan soos Afrikaanse korrespondensie nie. ... Dis na die Oorlog ... toe het dit beginne afkom na Afrikaans toe. Maar voor dit was dit die spreektaal. En as jy iemand op straat ontmoet, outomaties gesels jy Engels met die mense.¹⁶⁷

[Afrikaans in Cape Town, those days it was mostly English. All one's correspondence was also in English. Afrikaans correspondence didn't exist ... It was after the [Second World] War that things changed to Afrikaans. But before that [English] was the spoken language. And when you met people on the street, you automatically spoke English with them.]

165 Interview with Bailie.

166 Interview with Wileman.

167 Interview with Stamroodt.

Although many came from families that spoke Afrikaans, and farm-school educated children were taught in Afrikaans and Dutch, identity was often not consciously centered around language, and popular culture not specifically 'Afrikaans'. Seemingly, a different relationship with Afrikaans also prevailed for erstwhile landowners aspiring to middle-class status, and wage-working families.

Mrs Retief recalled her mother's love of reading (throughout the 1920s and 30s): 'Ek kan haar vandag so sien sit in haar stoel en lees ... Sy't gekoop en dit, en jy weet by gekry by mense en dit, leesstof gekry by mense en dit' ['I can see her in her chair, reading ... She bought things to read, and she borrowed from people']. She read 'meestal Afrikaans' 'mostly Afrikaans'. The family bought *Die Burger*, Cape Town's Afrikaans daily, popular culture magazines like *Die Huisgenoot*, and the DRC publication *Die Kerkbode*.¹⁶⁸

The Rossouw family never bought newspapers or magazines: 'Nee wat, [my pa-hulle] het seker maar gekoop wat hul nodig het en wat hulle nie nodig het nie, sonder gebly' ['Oh no, my parents bought what they needed, and what they didn't need, they did without']. The children went to an English school in Woodstock 'want my ma sê ons ken Afrikaans en ons moet Engels [leer] ... En ek dink elke week het ons bietjie Afrikaans gehad. Eers was dit Hooghollands en toe was dit Afrikaans ...' ['because my mother said we knew Afrikaans and had to learn English ... I think we had weekly Afrikaans lessons. First it was high Dutch, then Afrikaans...'] Francina and her siblings spoke English to each other and Afrikaans to their parents:

kyk, ons bure was almal Engels, die skole was almal Engels, alles was Engels in daardie dae.... Net my ma en my - net Sondae was ons Afrikaanse dag.... Ek meen as ons nou met Afrikaners, as my ma se mense nou kom kuier met ons, dan praat ons nou Afrikaans. Maar verder praat ons maar Engels.¹⁶⁹

[look, our neighbours were all English, the schools were all English, everything was English in those days.... Just my mother and my - Sundays were our Afrikaans day.... I mean when Afrikaners, when my mothers' people came to visit, then we spoke Afrikaans. But otherwise we spoke English.]

Francina married an Englishman in his 'Engelse' church because 'Engels maak nie vir my saak nie' ['English wasn't an issue for me']. Still, the couple's friends were English and Afrikaans 'so in die helfte, syne was nou Engels, myne was nou Afrikaans' ['about half-and-half, his was English, mine Afrikaans']. Even in Ysterplaat, shopping transactions occurred in English: 'Ek het al my koopwerk in Engels gedoen. Nou nog, doen als in Engels' ['I did all my shopping in English. Even now I do everything in English'].¹⁷⁰

168 Interview with Retief.

169 Interview with Wileman.

Political allegiance was also English-identified. While her father had not been interested in politics, she and her siblings all 'het gestem vir SAP. Die Engelse.' ['voted for the South African Party. The English.'] They did so because 'ons het seker maar so gevoel. Ons het maar gevoel vir die Engelse. Seker maar...' ['We probably just felt like that. We just felt for the English. I suppose so...'] In the 1948 election they voted against the nationalists. But in the next few years the SAP lost more ground and they switched allegiance. 'Nou stem ons maar Nasionale party'. ['now we vote for the National party.']¹⁷¹

Laura Groenewald also did not describe herself as Afrikaans. In a first interview she explained that 'Ons het meer groot geword met Engels eintlik, as Afrikaans. Die Afrikaans het ek eintlik hier, wat ek maar hier geleer het nê...' ['we grew up more English really, than Afrikaans. I really learnt Afrikaans here [the old age home]]. Her father's family was 'meer Engels' ['more English'], her mother 'Afrikaans', her relatives 'almal Afrikaans. Even toe my ouma met Wellman getroud is, is almal - het almal aan die Afrikaanse kerk behoort...' ['all Afrikaans. Even when my granny married Wellman they all belonged to the Afrikaans church...']. But her mother spoke English 'meeste van die tyd. Boeke lees, was dit Engelse boeke. Bybellees, was dit altyd Engels' ['most of the time. She read English books, the English bible']. Questioned about language in her family in a second interview, Groenewald explained:

Daardie jare toe ek skoolgegaan het jy weet, toe was ons maar onder die Engelse regering eintlik gewees, jy weet. Die koninklike kroon en so aan, die moet ons nou maar so, toe moet ons nou maar Engels en Afrikaans leer. Dis nou nie vandag wat jy 'n keuse kan maak as jy net Afrikaans wil wees en jy wil nie Engels praat nie. Dan het jy nie nodig om dit te doen nie.¹⁷²

[Those years when I went to school you know, then we were really under the English government. The king's crown and so on, so we had to learn English and Afrikaans. It wasn't like today when you can choose to be only Afrikaans and not speak English. Then you don't need to speak English.]

The Verster family also supported the United Party.¹⁷³ 'En toe hulle nou uitval toe [lag] stem ons nou maar vir die Nasionale Party. maar... tot vandag toe, ons bodder nie met politiek nie' ['And then after they lost [laughter] then we voted for National Party.... until today we're not interested in politics'].]

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Interview with Groenewald.

¹⁷³ See Chapter Five, footnote 65 for a brief explanation of the UP's origins.

Both Mrs Driver and Maria Stamroodt emphasised the impact of an English environment for single women newly arrived in Cape Town. The latter explained how female lodgers negotiated varied linguistic environments:

As jy by Engelssprekende mense loseer het, want meeste van die plattelandse kinders het tog maar losies gekry, dan het jy die taal gepraat wat hulle - as hulle Afrikaans gepraat het, het jy Afrikaans gepraat. As hulle Engels gepraat het, dan leer jy dit aan so vinnig as jy moontlik kan en as jy nie dit - ek het natuurlik al my Deens heeltemal vergeet wat ek aangeleer het, en ek moes ook by mense loseer...¹⁷⁴

[If you lodged with English speakers, because most children from the countryside did rent rooms - then you spoke the language that they - if they spoke Afrikaans, you spoke Afrikaans. If they spoke English then you learnt it as quickly as you possibly could and if you didn't ... Of course I've now forgotten all the Danish I learned, I also had to lodge with people ...]

When first in Cape Town of the 1920s and with a limited schooling in Dutch, Driver knew the importance of learning English and scrutinised every scrap of newspaper she could lay her hands on:

dis hoe ek eintlik Engels geleer het. Ek het my somer so half self geleer. Elke dingetjie wat ek in die hande kon gekry het het ek geleer. Ek weet nie wat die woord is nie, dan spel ek hom. So I figured it out.¹⁷⁵

[that's really how I learnt English. I taught myself. Every little thing I could get hold of I studied. If I didn't know the word I spelt it. So I figured it out.]

But for Mrs Driver, reconstructions of identity in subsequent years apparently complicated the issue of language. Asked whether her husband was Afrikaans, she expressed frustration at being 'mistaken' for English because of her surname, and an assertion of 'Afrikaner' identity:

ons het 'n nagnurse nou hier gekry, sy sê 'this is the lady with the Afrikaans name, with the English name that speaks Afrikaans.' Want sy vra vir my nog, 'what language do you speak?' Ek sê 'I'm a full-blown Afrikaner'. Ek sê 'there's no doekies rondom my ek is 'n Afrikaner en klaar'.¹⁷⁶

[we had a night nurse here, she said 'this is the lady with the ... English name that speaks Afrikaans'. She asked me, 'what language do you speak?' I said, 'I'm a full-blown Afrikaner'. I said 'there's no two ways about me I am an Afrikaner and finish'.]

A question about her family's home language elicited another assertion of Afrikaner identity:

My kinders het van begint af Afrikaans [geleer]. Want ek het gesê, ek is 'n Afrikaner, en is 'n Afrikaner[ma.] Ek sal hulle so ver soos, so goed soos, ek hulle kan help sal ek, ek sal nie sê met die taal nie, maar ek praat Afrikaans en ek lees Afrikaans en my bybel is Afrikaans en al.
En het u altyd Afrikaans tuis gepraat met die kinders?

174 Interview with Stamroodt.

175 Interview with Driver.

176 *Ibid.*

O ja, altyd, altyd. Daarom sê ek mos vir haar gesê, die suster. Ek sê my taal is Afrikaans en Afrikaans sal ek doodgaan.
En het u daai tyd ook al so gevoel?
O ja, ek voel nog altyd so, van begint af. Ek is 'n Afrikaner.

....
En het u, u vriende en so was hulle Engels en Afrikaans?
Ja, gemeng, gemeng. Engels en Afrikaans. Baie Engelse vriende gehad. En, maar ek het nie ge, vasgeraak aan hulle nie. Ek was 'n Afrikaner.¹⁷⁷

[My children learnt Afrikaans from the beginning. Because I said, I am an Afrikaner, and I am an Afrikaner [mother]. I could help them as far as, as well as, I would be able to help them, I won't be able to help them with the grammar but I speak Afrikaans and I read Afrikaans and my bible is Afrikaans and everything.

Interviewer: And did you always speak Afrikaans at home with the children?

Oh yes, always, always. That's why I told her, the nursing sister. I said my language is Afrikaans and Afrikaans I will die.

Interviewer: And did you also feel like that those days?

Oh yes, I always felt that, from the beginning. I am an Afrikaner.

...
Interviewer: And did you, your friends and so on were they English and Afrikaans?
Yes, mixed, mixed. English and Afrikaans. Had many English friends. But I didn't become close to them. I was an Afrikaner.]

But although she asserted that when she had children the family bought Afrikaans magazines, these were (upon further questioning) the English daily's: '... die *Cape Times*, and the *Argus*, die *Argus* was al die jare daar, *Cape Times*...' *Die Huisgenoot* 'het eers later gekom'. If Mrs Driver did not participate in the popular literature of the day during the 1930s, the decades' highlight of popular Afrikaner culture - the Voortrekker centenary - also did not involve her;

Nee daar, ek was al in die land der lewende, toe hulle hier uit Kaapstad getrek het was ek, maar ek het nie veel notisie geneem nie... My kinders was toe klein, hulle het nie deelgeneem nie. Nee jy weet en orals waardeur hulle geneem is, moes betaal word eintlik, soos rokke, want die voortrekkerrokke, en kappies. Ek het wel gemaak ja. Maar nooit persoonlik eintlik deelgeneem of my kinders daaraan nie. Nie eers my seuns nie. Hulle het wel so 'n bietjie volkspele gedoen, my dogter toe het volkspele gedoen en so aan. Maar dit was maar in die verbygaan...¹⁷⁸

[No, then I was already in the land of the living, when they trekked from Cape Town I was, but I didn't take much notice ... My children were small, they didn't participate. You know, everywhere where they [the processions] went one had to spend money, like dresses, the voortrekker dresses and bonnets. I did make them. But I never personally participated, nor did my children. Not even my sons. They did a bit of folk dancing, my daughter did folk dancing and so on. But that was just in passing...]

It was probably only from the 1940s that Mrs Driver's family became consciously 'Afrikaans' - and this development was initiated by her school-going daughter: 'My dogter, ek het ook net een dogter. sy was in matriek. Toe het sy geweier om een Engelse woord te

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Driver.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

praat...' [My daughter... she was in matric. Then she refused to speak one English word...'].¹⁷⁹

Unlike their United Party supporting contemporaries the Drivers were Nationalist Party supporters. Mrs Driver described herself as 'nie politiek bewus nie' [not politically conscious'] but ['ek was nasionaal gebore en nasionaal sal ek doodgaan. jy sal my nie daarvan kry nie...' ['I was born national and national I will die. You won't convince me otherwise ...']. The Bailies also voted Nationalist, 'my ouers ook. Hulle het nie geneuk met die ander ou goed nie' ['my parents as well. They didn't mess around with the other old things']. The Beukes' loyalty was secured by an event that was vivid in Kate's memory. She told a dramatic story of how her road-worker husband cycled from Baine's Kloof Pass through a stormy night and managed to meet a Nationalist Party MP in front of Parliament at 9 a.m. The promise of a job on the railways proved genuine, and they voted Nationalist ever after.¹⁸⁰

Conclusion

The life histories that emerge through the prompting of an interviewer, analysed with sensitivity to the power dynamics that shape such accounts, provide rich insights into the gender roles and expectations that shaped women's lives. Here, white Afrikaans women's working lives in the rural and urban Cape have thus been explored.

During the 1920s, a variety of economic and environmental factors combined to reduce the circumstances of the Cape's struggling white farmers and growing numbers of roaming *bywoners*, *trekboere* and wage labourers, and shaped women's lives in particular ways. Bozzoli has assumed that on South African farms, white Afrikaans women's labour was confined to the immediate vicinity of the household, that the spread of commodity exchange meant that their work-load decreased, and that health services became available to women in the 1920s. But in large parts of the Cape, economic development was slow to arrive. Moreover, as the memories of erstwhile *bywoner* and *trekboer* daughters show, access to land was a crucial determinant of gendered work allocation within families. Even during the 1930s many sharecropper's and migrant farmers' daughters did the heavy farm-work called 'manswerk', while married women were wont to practise various skills to make ends meet.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Interviews with Driver, Bailie and Beukes.

Women's experience of childbirth was also determined by their economic circumstance. Those without land often had minimal access to maternity care facilities. Even during the 1930s, some rural women preferred the attentions of 'lay' midwives although a growing number of women saw professionally trained doctors as experts to be called on in emergencies. But many poor white women gave birth in isolated and traumatic circumstances because they did not have access to supportive family networks or could not afford help.

The first decades of the century also saw the rapid growth of white working-class communities in Cape Town. Whether they came to the city on their own or with their parents, most daughters earned money for the survival of working-class families. In working-class families, work at home, in offices and on factory floors were divided amongst unmarried female members, while male siblings also contributed wages.

Women's words about life in Cape Town of the 1920s and 1930s did not only touch on gendered work experience, but also provided clues to their varied sense of identity and community. For some, charity was an every-day part of their lives, for others self-sufficiency a matter of pride. If memories of residential space was closely linked to the presence or absence of 'kleurlinge', this combined with varying degrees of antipathy, indifference or even expressions of neighbourliness. A strong sense of religious community was not always linked to the Dutch Reformed Church. While some women professed undying loyalty to the Nationalist Party, attitudes to language provide a clue to the fluidity of urban identity during these decades. Stories of coming to Cape Town included references to the necessity of learning English, but few women articulated a sense of identity centered on Afrikaans.

This was the context for the ACVV's work as fifteen years of leadership from Roos and other founding members drew to an end. How did the organisation respond to rural poverty and the particular difficulties of *platteland* women's lives? What was the response of female Afrikaner nationalists to the rapidly changing circumstances of women's work in Cape Town? How would they seek to shape the political and cultural sense of identity of rural poor whites and the newly proletarianised families whom they claimed as members of the *volk*? These are some of the questions that the next two chapters seek to explore.

Chapter Four

**`Die Bewustheid van Armoed' (`The Awareness of Poverty'):
Afrikaner Women's Philanthropy during the 1920s**



Plate 17. The ACVV central executive, 1929. Most of these women were active from the early 1920s. Miemie Rothmann stands at the right; ACVV president Minnie Roome in front of her. Ida Theron stands at the left, with Mrs Elizabeth Jordaan in the middle of the second row. Anna Geyer sits in front, next to Roome.



*Plate 18. M.E. Rothmann with her son and daughter in 1921, when she was sub-editor of *Die Boerevrou*.*



Modern but modest - properly fashionable *Afrikaanse meisies*. *Plate 19*: This illustration, from *Die Huisvrou*, 2 May 1922, accompanied a letter to 'Magrieta' cautioning her against the dangerous post-war fashions. *Plate 20*: 'Hoe prakties is hulle nie en tog, hoe aantreklik!' ('How practically they are dressed and yet, how attractively!') House-wives pictured in 'Die Sielkunde van Aantrek' ('The Psychology of Dress'), *Die Huisgenoot*, 9 July 1926.



'n Paar van ons grootste
meisies,

Plate 21. 'A few of our biggest girls at Blauwvlei', pictured in Die Boerevrou, January 1926. Pupils at this ACVV Huishoudskool at (near Worcester) were all committed to the care of the state in terms of the Children's Act of 1913. They would soon be placed in domestic service.



*Plate 22. Salt River, 1929. 'n Paar van ons Klubkinders op vad van Skool na die Leeskamer' ('A few of our Clubchildren on the way from School to the Reading room'). This venture, initiated by the *Bond vir Maatskaplike Werk*, another Afrikaans welfare organisation, had the financial support of the ACVV.*

Chapter Four

1. *Volksmoeders* and *Nasionale Vrouens* (Nationalist Women):

ACVV Leadership and the Gender Discourse of the 1920s

The early 1920s heralded important shifts in the leadership of the ACVV as a new generation of women moved into prominence - women who would shape ACVV policy for the next two decades. Some *predikantsvroue* and ACVV founders still held important positions. Roos, who withdrew from active work in the ACVV in 1921, handed leadership of the Cape Town branch to Minni Roome (married to a prominent Cape Town DRC minister) and the presidency to Cradock's formidable Elizabeth Jordaan (the wife of a retired farmer) in 1923. Roome became vice-president of the ACVV in 1927, and three years later she succeeded Jordaan. Roome did not assume Roos's dominant role in formulating policy. In fact, dynamic women less closely tied to the church - some with careers of their own - were becoming more influential in the ACVV. Most prominent amongst them was Marie ('Miemie') E. Rothmann.

Like many founding members of the ACVV, Rothmann was also a product of an American-run school - more exceptionally for a woman born in 1875, she was university graduate.¹ But in spite of this privileged education, Rothmann's own explanation of her interest in welfare referred to memories of relative poverty. Her father, a wagonmaker in Swellendam, had inherited a flourishing business but was poor at the time of his untimely death in the year of her birth. Rothmann's mother was left to care for seven children and had to do sewing at home to make ends meet. Childhood deprivation fuelled her interest in welfare work:

Note: The Cape Town ACVV's minute books for 1920 to 1930 are filed under (CA, DRC, V21) 2/1/1/3, 2/1/1/4 and 2/1/1/5. Material from these are referred to with the archival reference number, followed by 'Cape Town' and the date of the relevant meeting. The Cradock and Upington branch minute books were consulted at the branch offices, have no reference numbers, and are indicated with the relevant date and name of the town only. See also Chapter Two, p.80 for an explanation how material from countryside branch minute books are referenced.

1 In her autobiography *My Beskeie Deel: 'n Outobiografiese Vertelling* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1976), Rothmann recalled the impact that the American teachers - as important and authoritative in the townspeople's eyes as male head-masters, doctors and the magistrate - had on Dutch-Afrikaans girls. The well-equipped schools, the public displays of knowledge by girls (not the boys) in the town hall, taught them 'dat 'n meisie omtrent alles kennis moes opdoen: ons kon opgelei word om 'n ewe belangrike baan te betree as onse onderwyseresse. Die wêreld het vir ons oopgegaan' ['that girls had to learn about everything: we could be trained to enter careers as important as those of our teachers. The world opened up for us.'] (pp.53-54.)

Moontlik omdat ek self arm grootgeword het en tog nooit kon begryp dat ek om daardie rede aan 'n ander volksgroep behoort het as die kinders van welgesteldes nie. Ek kon die idee van klasonderskeiding maar nie aanvaar nie.²

[perhaps because I myself grew up poor and could never accept that I therefore belonged to another people than the children of the wealthy. I simply could not accept the idea of class difference.]

The family's struggle to make ends meet also explained Rothmann's view of herself as closely aligned, yet not entirely identified with the Dutch Reformed Church. The *dominee's* suggestion that her children should attend church barefoot (they couldn't afford shoes) alienated her mother; when her eldest daughter was not chosen for a mission school post she switched to Anglicanism. Her daughter never formally joined the DRC.³

Rothmann joined Cape Town's ACVV aged forty-seven in 1922 when she moved to the city from rural Swellendam (see plate 18). By then, she was already long committed to the cause of Afrikaans.⁴ Soon a key member on *hoofbestuur* (the 'national' executive), she remained influential when she returned to her hometown a few years later. This articulate writer, journalist and erstwhile teacher had separated from her husband after a short marriage. She had supported herself and her two children ever since. She divorced him and reverted to her maiden name in 1911.⁵ Rothmann soon developed close ties to other prominent ACVV women. Ida Theron, who also served on the central executive and managed the Tulbagh

2 *Ibid.*, p.236.

3 *Ibid.*, pp.21-22. Rothmann also recalls the influence of her brother, a self-styled 'Vrydenker' ['Free thinker'] who read the *Agnostic Journal*, Thomas Huxley and Darwin. Even so, her personal correspondence reflected the thoughts of a deeply religious Christian.

4 As the English-educated Rothmann explains (*ibid.*, pp.96-154), the Jameson Raid of 1895 was a political 'turning-point', and the South African War profoundly shaped her political consciousness. Her brother, who had acquired Transvaal citizenship, fought against the British. Rothmann taught in Johannesburg private schools until 1899, when she and her sister Annie returned to Swellendam. The two women were placed under house-arrest in the village as Boer sympathisers. Rothmann spent some of her time painting the names of Boer Generals on hat ribbons. During the war, the family still wrote to each other in English, and Rothmann kept an English journal. But she also wrote a 'sketch' in Dutch for *De Zuid-Afrikaan*. Her first published verse in Afrikaans appeared in the journal *De Unie* of 1907. At the time she was caring for her two small children and keeping house for her sister Annie, then a teacher at a local English school. (Rothmann was also running a small photographic studio and painting names on coffins). In the same year her sister was dismissed 'for insubordination' - she had bought Dutch books for the school library. Without a steady source of income and unable to find teaching posts at English-dominated schools, the sisters started a private school. They taught in Afrikaans. During this time Miemie Rothmann also joined Swellendam's newly founded *Afrikaanse Taal Vereniging*. In 1913, she was amongst the many women who journeyed to Bloemfontein for the inauguration of the *Vrouemonument*.

5 *Ibid.*, p.161.

huishoudskool from 1931, came from a family of strong-minded women⁶. She never married and remained with the organisation throughout her career. E.C. van der Lingen, another university graduate, was an active and vocal Cape Town executive member. Anna Geyer, wife of *Die Burger*'s sub-editor, was a dynamic and influential ACVV member; she served on the Cape Town executive from the early 1920s and on the central executive from 1927.⁷

From 1920, women from the four Afrikaans welfare organisations in the country also facilitated coordination by founding an umbrella body, the *Federale Vroue Raad* (Federal Women's Council).⁸ Provincial delegates held annual conferences to exchange ideas and co-ordinate campaigns. Especially after the Labour/Nationalist coalition victory of 1924, Afrikaans women's organisations eager to influence government policy used the *Federale Vroue Raad* to approach state departments.

Officially, the ACVV eschewed party politics and rather held prayer meetings for the unification of the *volk*.⁹ But in 1922, several prominent Cape Town ACVV members, including Geyer, Rothmann and van der Lingen, were founding members of a new, party-political women's organisation, the Cape province's *Nasionale Vroue Party* (NVP).¹⁰ Unlike the Transvaal branch of the NP (called the *Vroue Nasionale Party* and already established in 1915) the Cape organisation was founded with the imminent enfranchisement of women in mind - and at the suggestion of Afrikaner nationalist men. As Rothmann commented in *Die Burger* of 1922, 'dis een van die mooiste dinge wat die Afrikaanse vrou ten beurt val, dat die mans haar vra om te kom help ...' ['this is one of the loveliest things to have happened to Afrikaans women, that the men are asking them for help ...']

Rothmann (apparently quoting a nationalist MP) explained this development as follows: in other *volke* ['peoples'], men's sphere of work was entirely separate from that of women.

6 Her younger sister Erika Theron would establish social work as a university subject and write a study on Afrikaans factory women in the 1930s.

7 *Die Burger*, 'Mev. Anna Geyer, krag van ACVV, oorlede', Dec. 17, 1984.

8 *Die Huisgenoot*, April 1920, p.397.

9 Cape Archives (CA), Archives of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), V21 (ACVV collection), 2/1/1/3 (Cape Town) March 25, 1920.

10 E.G. Malan, a central figure in the Cape Town branch of the ACVV until her death in 1928, was president of the NVP. M.E. Rothmann, E.C. van der Lingen and Anna Geyer were also founding members and active in the organisation from 1922.

But 'die boer en sy vrou' ['the farmer and his wife'] were used to working alongside each other, hence this easy transition to political cooperation. Of course, this was a rather idealised view of the past. Women who worked alongside their men had long been barred from formal politics; many of the middle-class women involved in the NVP were also more isolated from male working environments than their farmer predecessors or colleagues. Cape Nationalist men who now advocated women's party-political organisation certainly responded to the fact that rivals like the SAP already had an active woman's party, and also anticipated the need to win female voters' support in the near future. Moreover, they were long familiar with women's ability to organise and raise funds.

But the NVP soon developed into an organisation that did more than encourage the many rural branches founded by its travelling organisers to collect money for the NP's election campaigns. Instead, the organisation's programmes reflected the leadership's conviction that promoting Afrikaner nationalism meant building health and welfare campaigns - and most especially, 'leeslus' ['love of reading'] drives to encourage reading amongst poor and rural 'Afrikaners'. In fact, for the nine years of the NVP's existence (it was dissolved when white women were enfranchised) its work dovetailed closely with the ACVV's projects.¹¹

The advent of a new ACVV leadership more openly supportive of the National Party - albeit as members of the NVP - took place alongside renewed attempts by Afrikaner nationalists to articulate women's role in society. As a spokesman for the *mansparty* (men's party) explained at a NVP congress, 'ons [het] die vrouens se hulp nodig' ['we need the women's help'] in the struggle for 'volksopbou' ['building the *volk*']. Speaking in 1924, he employed the already familiar discourse of motherhood, moral superiority and suffering - but with a subtle shift of emphasis. Woman had to participate 'as vrou en moeder' ['as woman/wife and mother'], because she was an idealist, and because woman and child suffered most when calamities like war hit the *volk*. In contrast to the pointedly anti-suffragist comments of politicians or *predikante* some ten or fifteen years previously, Stals urged women to organise and voice their political views. Like earlier nationalists, he celebrated motherhood as women's driving force:

Sy kan nie eendragtelik optree nie om hierdie beter skikking [van sake] te maak nie, tensy dat sy georganiseer is ... Al het die moeders vir jare dieselfde ideaal gekoester, was hulle stemmeloos; hulle was sonder uitdrukkingsvermoë. Nou kan die gevoel geuit word. Al is dit nog nie al die vrouens wat moeders is nie, tog is die moeder krag by almal.¹²

¹¹ *Die Burger*, 'NVP Nuus', 11 Aug. 1925; 'Nasionale Vroue organiseer bazaar', 14 July 1925; 'Die Vroue Parlement', 13 Dec. 1927. Most quotations from Rothmann's *Vrouesake* column can also be found in her personal collection of newspaper cuttings at the University of Stellenbosch Document Centre (M.E. Rothmann collection, 55.ko.8).

[She cannot act in unison to improve conditions unless she is organised ... Although the mothers held the same ideals for years they were voiceless; they could not express their views. Now they can do so. Even though all the women are not yet mothers, yet the mother is the force behind them all]

Of course, these words of praise claimed exaggerated importance for the NVP - probably the first Afrikaans women's organisation founded on male request - and failed to recognise women's vocal support for nationalism in previous years. But it was also true that Afrikaner women's political confidence was now accompanied by a far greater presence of female voices in Afrikaner print culture. During the 1920s, women journalists and writers contributed extensively to the construction of Afrikaans femininity. Indeed, there was considerable overlap between leading NVP and Afrikaans welfare organisation members, and the editors of new women's magazines.

South Africa's first Afrikaans woman's weekly, *Die Boerevrou* (The Farmer's Wife/Countrywoman), had appeared in 1919. Published in the Transvaal but also read in the Cape, *Die Boerevrou* would play an important role in shaping and popularising *volksmoeder* discourse.¹³ Its editor was forty-year old Mabel Malherbe. The product of an English schooling and long interested in journalism, she had married into a prominent republican family in Pretoria in 1904.¹⁴ Her social circle included such eminent contributors to the fashioning of Afrikaner culture as Gustav Preller (popular historian and journalist) and Willem Malherbe (editor of the cultural magazine *Die Brandwag*).¹⁵ A staunch supporter of the National Party from its founding in 1914, Malherbe had helped found the Transvaal Women's National Party in 1915. She also belonged to the ACVV's sister organisation in

12 *Die Burger*, 'Dr. Stals oor die vrou se deel', 21 Oct. 1924.

13 Circulation figures for *Die Boerevrou* are not available. Letters to the magazine show that it was read throughout South Africa, that many women lived on farms and in rural villages, and that many of its readers were struggling to make ends meet. Even in the northern Cape, ACVV women were encouraged to read this publication. The Uppington branch's minutes for May 1925 noted a member's speech about 'die nut van lees' ['the usefulness of reading'] in which she recommended *Die Boerevrou* as an example of 'die regte leesstof ... vir die besige huisvrou' ['the right reading material ... for the busy housewife']. Very few letters to *Die Boerevrou* were from the urban working class.

14 Lou-Marié Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity: Women and Afrikaner nationalism in the Volksmoeder discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919-1931' (M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1991), pp.6-7.

15 For a discussion of Preller's work, see I. Hofmeyr, 'Popularising history: the Case of Gustav Preller' (Johannesburg: African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987).

the Transvaal, the SAVF. Malherbe therefore shared many interests with her friend Miemie Rothmann - *Die Boerevrou*'s sub-editor from 1920 to 1922.¹⁶

As Lou-Marié Kruger has argued, *Die Boerevrou* - a magazine compiled, managed by and written for women - 'proposed to focus on the position of Afrikaans women but also to link this with ethnic concerns in particular ways'. In its first issue, Mabel Malherbe announced that woman's time had come ('nou kom die tyd van die vrou aan!'), urged all Afrikaans women to educate themselves as mothers for the benefit of their children and, ultimately, for the benefit of the *volk*.¹⁷

Die Boerevrou's motto - 'ek sien haar wen, want haar naam is vrou en moeder' ['I see her triumph, because her name is wife and mother'] and its cover picture - a bronze statue of a young woman in voortrekker dress - encapsulated the thrust of its cultural and political project. The quote was drawn from a poem about the 1915 women's demonstration by J.F.E. Celliers, and portrayed Afrikaner woman as a triumphant and sacrificial sufferer for the good of husband, son and brother.¹⁸ The statue, *Nooientjie van die Onderveld* ['Girl of the Low-veld'] by Anton van Wouw, depicted a woman with her hands folded in front of her, her head slightly bowed and looking down with a pensive expression on her face.¹⁹ As Kruger argues, volksmoeder discourse aimed to translate ordinary mothers' lives 'in more dramatic terms linking it with the history of the nation'. Women's experience of motherhood, their sacrifices for their husbands and children, were compared to their foremothers' more dramatic suffering. Through extensive discussion of the *nooientjie*'s

16 Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', pp.6-7, p.174.

17 *Ibid.*, pp.170-73.

18 The poem was inspired by a march to the Union buildings in 1915, prompted by the 'Rebellie' (see Chapter Two, p.128).

19 Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', pp.210-11. Jan F.E. Celliers's poem 'By die vrouebetoging' was published in *Die Brandwag* of 1915 and is quoted in full by Kruger. See also Kruger's fascinating account of a discussion in *Die Boerevrou*'s letter column about the merits of the cover picture. Letters by women who endorsed the symbolic value of the statue contained (according to Kruger) 'a very significant contradiction: the symbol of the quiet, passive woman strongly contradicts the suggestions of an active, industrious woman ... quotations try to resolve the contradiction by making the symbol a reflection of the *soul* of the Boer woman, while the activity and industriousness supposedly functioned on a more superficial level...' Others criticised the image of the statue as an unrealistic and inappropriate portrayal of Afrikaner women - ordinary women were not passive and silent, but involved in a myriad of household tasks. Kruger shows how readers' images were 'never denied, but rather appropriated in the *volksmoeder* discourse' (pp.211-15).

symbolic value in which readers also participated, readers' images were also appropriated in the *volksmoeder* discourse.²⁰

The notions of home, house and household featured prominently in *Die Boerevrou*. As in earlier decades, women's maternal destiny and wifely duties were emphasised. Through stories and discussion, motherly virtue and marriage were inextricably linked - and marrying outside the *volk* condemned. Like earlier promoters of the *volksmoeder* discourse, the magazine linked mothering and the work mothers did to the private domestic sphere. Mothers were seen as responsible for their children's education - particularly with regards to 'Afrikaner' culture. As Kruger argues, *volksmoeder* discourse thus 'served to keep women from powerful positions in the public sphere', but allocated them 'powerful positions in the private sphere of the household':

As *Volksmoeders* they had to see to it that the values and culture transmitted would be that of the *Afrikanervolk*. Through the *volksmoeder* discourse, nationalism thus penetrated the household and acquired a powerful agent in this sphere.²¹

While *Die Boerevrou* promoted aspects of the *volksmoeder* already present in earlier depictions, its particular achievement was to create forums for discussion that drew Afrikaans women into the 'imagined community' of the *volk*. Like *Die Huisgenoot* of the 1920s, *Die Boerevrou* also combined explanations of Afrikaans women's cultural and ideological task with a pervasive and systematic construction of an Afrikaans domesticity. Articles on beauty and fashion, architecture and interior decorating sought to transform readers' every day experience into an affirmation of Afrikaner culture. Advocates of women as *volksmoeders* accepted the split between private and public worlds, but sought to reinterpret the relative value and significance of these different worlds. Afrikaans women were told that by carrying out their domestic duties, they were shaping the future of the nation.²²

Women were thus encouraged to make 'Voortrekker' needlework part of their everyday lives. Given Malherbe's friendship with Gustav Preller, that central figure in the invention

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.215.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.278-9.

²² In this respect Kruger (*ibid.*, pp.315-6) has pointed out strong parallels between the re-interpretation of women's private worlds in the context of Nazi Germany and Afrikaner nationalism. Drawing on *Mothers in the Fatherland* by Claudia Koonz, she argues that *volksmoeder* discourse did not simply combine domestic power with public subordination. Mothering was given public importance, and the discourse 'indirectly promised women public power'. As Koonz explains, German women's domestic activities were given new, practical social importance and the familiar world of the domestic sphere was itself made a public sector.

of Voortrekker tradition, it was hardly suprising that *Die Boerevrou* also urged women to wear 'Voortrekker dresses' at national festivals. Kruger points to the gradual success of a project that constructed the *kappie* (bonnet) as a symbol of the past and promoted the copying of correct replicas of Voortrekker clothes.²³

Although *Die Boerevrou* featured reports from the Afrikaans women's welfare organisations and promoted their campaigns, 'political' matters were studiously avoided. Kruger has fascinatingly explored the contradictory nature of Mabel Malherbe's projects. Always a supporter of women's suffrage, her name was included in a list of Pretoria women who intended to meet with the prime minister about suffrage for women in 1922. She also advocated votes for women in the Transvaal VNP. And yet suffrage never featured in *Die Boerevrou* until 1930, apparently because it was regarded controversial and divisive.²⁴

But while women's role as 'koningin van die huis' ['queen of the house'] was stressed by Malherbe's magazine, this NVP and SAVF member also sanctioned women's public participation in matters of welfare, health and education. In the logic of the *volksmoeder* discourse, such activities were sanctioned as extensions of the mothering role. Malherbe's candidacy in the city council election was presented as an extension of housekeeping duties. 'Ons reken dat vrouens in die huishouding van die stad ook hulle stem moet laat hoor...' ['We believe that women also must make their voices heard in the household of the city ...']²⁵ With this 'language of social housekeeping', Malherbe claimed responsibility in non-familial social spaces and 'extended women's realm from the home into the community, city and nation', thus helping to 'forge a new, more inclusive definition of the political'.²⁶ In

23 *Ibid.*, p.216.

24 Kruger provides an intriguing account of Malherbe's contradictory cultural identity. While *Die Boerevrou* promoted Afrikaans and explained the important role women played in preserving Afrikaner culture, Malherbe always spoke English at home. She did not practise the domestic skills advocated in her magazine; she was also not religious and rarely attended church. Her son became a member of the South African Communist Party, her daughter an actress in London - political and cultural choices apparently respected by their mother.

25 *Ibid.*, pp.316-18. According to Kruger, Malherbe's conscious manipulation of language is suggested by her recollections of the strategy used to convince NVP women that women should have suffrage in the mid-'20s. Malherbe related the following conversation with a fellow campaigner after the NVP congress voted in their favour: "Besef jy", het sy laggend gevra, "dat ons die stemreg vir die Afrikaanse vrou feitlik op 'n kinderwa ingeloods het?" ["Do you realise", she asked laughingly, "that we basically launched the vote for women on a perambulator?"]

26 I am here applying Eileen Boris' claim for American women's welfare projects to Malherbe. See 'The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the

fact, in this respect Malherbe's ideas resembled those of a host of female 'maternalist' reformers in other countries. Women from varied political persuasions all 'exalted women's capacity to mother and extended to society as a whole the values of care, nurturance and morality'. Maternalist politics 'extolled the virtues of domesticity while simultaneously legitimating women's public relationships to politics and the state, to community, workplace and marketplace...'²⁷

Another Afrikaans magazine for women, somewhat different in emphasis, was published in Cape Town from 1922.²⁸ [While *Die Huisvrou* was less explicit and consistent in its propagation of an Afrikaner culture, it idealised motherhood, promoted an Afrikaans domesticity and consciously aligned itself with post-war antipathy towards women wage-earners.²⁹ The first editorial expressed an aversion to politics, eulogised traditional, Afrikaans housewifely virtues and explained the problematic results of war-time work opportunities for women:

Ouers van dogters betreur vandag daardie nuwe ontwikkeling in die lewe bitter - 'n ontwikkeling wat hulle dogters van die huis wegneem na die kantoor en die winkel, om daar in konkurrensie met die man te kom, na 'n werkkring en 'n loopbaan wat hulle heeltemal ongeskik maak vir die eenvoudige, huislike lewe van huisvrouens en van moeders van die volgende geslag.³⁰

[Today, parents of girls bitterly regret this new development - a development that removes their daughters from home to the offices or shops where they compete with men; to positions and careers that make them entirely unsuitable for the simple, domestic life of housewives and mothers of the next generation.]

"Political", in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, (eds), *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p.214.

27 Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, 'Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920', *American Historical Review* 95, 4 (1990), p.1079.

28 Its editor (who remained anonymous within the pages of *Die Huisvrou*) was Minie Donovan. Her husband, A.D. Donovan, edited *The Cape*, a magazine aligned to the South African Party and sharing many of *Die Huisvrou*'s views on women (see below).

29 *Het Noord-Westelijke Nationalist* of 2 May 1919 commented on a similar trend in the English press. *The Cape* had first told young women 'that it is their patriotic duty to do war work in offices and elsewhere and so do their "little bit". Today "The Cape" (Cape Town) writes that "Every female worker who worked during the war and still wants to keep her post today, knowing that an ex-soldier is available and needs that work, is unpatriotic"' (translated). South African publications echoed the post-war backlash in Britain, France and the United States. As Ruth Pierson writes in her review article 'Beautiful Soul or Just Warrior: Gender and War' (*Gender and History* 1, 1 (1989)), the 'importance of women's productive capacity during wartime swiftly gave way to the importance of women's reproductive capacity at war's end...' (p.81.)

30 *Die Huisvrou*, 2 May 1922, pp.1-2.

Most Afrikaans housewives, explained the magazine, were 'moeder-vrouens' ['mother-women'] who combined multiple tasks: they managed farms, ran households, reared and educated their children. As such they were indispensable to the welfare of the *volk*. Suffrage was irrelevant to carrying out this their highest calling. In fact, women who wanted the vote were 'onnatuurlik' ['unnatural'], and rejected as useless and destructive. 'Ons sal ons rug draai vir 'n vrou wat haar eerste toespraak in die Volksraad hou, en ons sal die vrou met 'n babetjie in haar arms aanskou as die werklike weldoenster van die wêreld...' ['We'll turn our back on a woman delivering her maiden speech in Parliament, and we will gaze upon the woman with a baby in her arms as the true benefactress of the world...']³¹

By the mid-1920s, however, *Die Huisvrou*'s editor was also qualifying her condemnation of power-hungry 'nuwe vrouens' ('new women') by explaining that she did not condemn women's participation in public life and their serving on public organisations out of hand. '(A)lles hang af van die aard van die werk wat so 'n publieke liggaam doen' ['Everything depends on the nature of the work done by such bodies']. Women who really had time for work outside the home were justified in participating in philanthropic organisations and campaigns for public health.³²

But most editions of the magazine combined explicit arguments against women working outside their homes with domestic tips for frugal housewives in the 'onderlinge hulp en vriendskap' ['mutual help and friendship'] column. Marital advice ('hoe ek Susanna beweeg het om mooi te lyk in die kombuis' ['how I got Susanna to look pretty in the kitchen']) accompanied stories of working girls who exchanged their jobs for the romance of marriage.³³ If *Die Boerevrou* alluded to women's duties for the *volk*, *Die Huisvrou* aligned itself with the *versoeningspolitiek* (conciliation politics) of the South African Party. An editorial reminded women that 'die heilige plig van elke Suid-Afrikaanse vrou is om 'n groot wit ras op te kweek, om op die pragtige tradisies van die twee suster rasse, Hollands en Engels, te bou ...' ['the holy duty of every South African woman is to nurture a great white race, to build on the beautiful traditions of the two sister races, Dutch and English...']³⁴

31 *Ibid.*, 9 May 1922, p.2.

32 *Ibid.*, 8 Sept. 1925, pp.1-2.

33 *Ibid.*, 9 May 1922, pp.1-2; 16 May 1922, p.26; 23 May 1922, p.21; 3 July 1923, pp.1-3; 25 Sept. 1923, pp.20-21; 22 Jan. 1924, pp.1-2. The weekly, sold at 3d., was aimed at poor as well as middle-class Afrikaners. Circulation figures are not available, but subscribers included women throughout South Africa - many lived on farms and in rural villages. Letters apologising for the late payment of subscriptions suggest that a number of readers were poor.

While *Die Huisvrou* rarely discussed national festivals and 'Voortrekker' clothing, it shared another interest with the fashion pages of magazines like *Die Huisgenoot* and the Afrikaans daily *Die Burger*. Western fashion industries now promoted less restrictive clothing for women - styles that readily appealed to South Africa's educated and working women. *Die Huisvrou* and other Afrikaans publications sought to shape an unthreatening Afrikaans femininity by promoting women's clothing that took cognisance of the popular 'modern' 1920s styles, yet infused these with 'Afrikaans' propriety.³⁵ Weekly letters from the fashion correspondent (see plate 19 for an accompanying illustration) included such comments on contemporary fashion as:

Ek is soos jy weet, liefste Magrieta, nie bekrompe nie, maar die rokke van die laaste tyd, wat die persoon halfnaak laat, het my baie verdriet veroorsaak, en met skaamte vervul. Maar daar is gelukkig beter dae voorhande en ons sal terug sien op die verfoeilike modes van die laaste jare as 'n teken van die vreeslikhede en abnormale tye wat op die oorlog gevolg het. Dus, my liewe kind, as jy vir jou 'n nuwe rok laat maak, onthou die vernaamste is dat hy moet tot op jou enkels reik...³⁶

[As you know my dearest Magrieta I am not conservative, but the latest dresses, that leave a person half naked, caused me much grief and filled me with shame. But luckily better days lie ahead and we will look back upon the abominable fashions of recent years as a sign of the horrible and and abnormal times that followed the war. Therefore, my dear child, when you have a new dress made, remember the most important thing is that it must reach to your ankles...]

But the 1920s was a decade of changing and contrasting attitudes towards the feminine. A distinctly new voice to emerge in the early 1920s was that of Marie du Toit with the publication of *Vrou en Feminist. Of iets oor die Vrouevraagstuk* (Woman and Feminist. Or a Comment on the Woman Question). This little-known sister of Totius (that author of poems celebrating female domesticity and *volksmoeders*) supported women's suffrage as but one means, albeit a powerful one, to women's liberation. Her book revealed a feminism more radical than that of the South African suffragettes, and displayed no interest in promoting notions of the *volksmoeder*. Several Dutch-Afrikaans publications reviewed the book - in spite of some criticism, *Die Huisgenoot* even recommended it to its women readers. But the book was probably not widely read or supported.³⁷

34 *Ibid.*, 18 Dec. 1923, p.28.

35 *Ibid.*, 2 May 1922, p.3; 18 Dec. 1923, p.8; 12 Feb. 1924, pp.6-7. Compare *Die Huisgenoot*, 9 July 1926.

36 *Die Huisvrou*, 2 May 1922, p.3.

37 Reviews appeared in *Die Burger* (3 Aug. 1921) *Die Huisgenoot* (Nov. 1921, p.275) and *Die Boerevrou* (Sept. 1921, p.9).

Rothmann's regular contributions to *Die Burger* from 1922 also represented a very particular contribution to the redefinition of 'Afrikaner' femininity and were certainly more widely read than *Vrou en Feminist*. On Tuesday mornings, *Die Burger*'s woman readers could henceforth turn to their 'own' page - where 'MER' not only promoted female Afrikaner nationalists' party-political and welfare projects, but also reflected upon gender roles in society.³⁸

Rothmann's predecessor in *Die Burger* of the late 1910s had styled herself a perserver of the old values (and old 'Voortrekker' fashions) and never broached political or contentious issues.³⁹ Like her contemporaries in cultural and women's magazines, Rothmann occasionally contributed to the construction of a modern, Afrikaans feminine fashion through essays on, say, the phenomenon of 'verbygaande modes' ['passing fashions'] or the dubious attraction of 'nude stockings'.⁴⁰ But her interest in fashion was minimal, and the domestic skills promoted in the women's magazines were mostly relegated to another part of the newspaper. Rothmann's 'Vrouesake' ('Women's issues') column claimed other subjects as appropriate material for female discussion. As E.C. van der Lingen (fellow ACVV and NVP member) argued in a guest article, the press neglected women's interests and activities:

(A)l 'n nasie se werksaamhede en hoedanighede word nie in die publieke pers weerspieël nie. En nou praat ek soos 'n vrou ... in geen koerant kry ons 'n weerspieëling van wat in die gees van die vrou van Suid-Afrika aangaan nie.⁴¹

[All the activities and concerns of a nation are not represented in the public press. And now I speak as a woman ... in no paper do we find a reflection of the spirit of the South African woman.]

Van der Lingen was referring to the relative lack of press coverage of women's public activities and interests (she proceeded to discuss the work of various women's organisations.) Of course, family magazines like *Die Huisgenoot* devoted a few pages to the ACVV's activities; *Die Boerevrou* likewise supported the northern women's organisations. But Rothmann's efforts to render women's interests visible in *Die Burger* both complemented and went beyond *Die Boerevrou*'s brief.

38 The newspaper was published in Cape Town, and had an urban as well as rural readership.

39 See, for example, *Die Burger*, 12 May 1917 and 2 July 1917.

40 *Ibid.*, 'Die verbygaande modes', 31 May 1922; 'Kouse, ens.', 14 April 1925. See also Rothmann's discussion of class division and fashion, 'Klasonderskeiding. 'n Anti-mode praatjie' ['Class division. A talk against fashion'], 27 Nov. 1926.

41 *Ibid.*, 'Vroue-verenigings', 26 Aug. 1924.

From the beginning, women's party-political activities featured prominently in *Vrouesake*. In fact, Rothmann's ideas about women and politics contrasted sharply with the conservative viewpoints expressed by ACVV leaders like Roos only a few years before. Careful justifications of why women were publicly active were replaced by an impatient dismissal of conservatism:

Die mense wat meen dat die vrou se werk by die sorg vir die man in die huis beperk behoort te wees erken dat dit tog niks help dat hulle hulle stelling neerlê nie; die vrouens organiseer tog buitekant en pak volksake aan...⁴²

[The people who think that women's work should be limited to looking after their husbands at home themselves acknowledge that saying this makes no difference; regardless of this, the women organise outside and tackle issues pertaining to the *volk*...]

Rothmann's original editorial brief when appointed in 1922 - as she explained sardonically before an election two years later - had been not to write about politics. ('En mevrou, tog nie politiek nie!' ['and Madam, please no politics!'])⁴³ But women's entry into party-politics made this impossible. 'Kan ons nog in die vroue-kolomme buiten die politiek bly? en hoe sal ons maak nou dat dit eleksietyd is? ... gaan ons werklik so buiten die stryd bly as wat ons voorgee?' ['Can we still ignore politics in the women's columns? And what will we do now that it's election time? ... will we really stay as removed from the struggle as we pretend to do?'] Unlike the previous generation of ACVV leadership, Rothmann challenged the distinction between party-political and welfare work. She pointed to the inevitably political - and nationalist nature of Afrikaans women's philanthropy:

die verafskude politiek is tog maar niks as volksake nie ... en daar is baie volksake wat ons vrouens nou al met ywer studeer. Die ACVV en sulke liggame sorg daarvoor. Die ACVV sal dit self miskien nie besef nie, maar hulle is die laaste sestien jaar besig om die Afrikaner-vrouens op te lei in niks minder as die politiek...⁴⁴

[the despised politics is in fact nothing other than matters of interest to the *volk*.... And our women are already busily studying many *volksake*. The ACVV and similar organisations see to that. The ACVV may itself be unaware of this, but for the last sixteen years it has educated women in nothing less than politics...]

On Rothmann's page, a range of issues pertaining to welfare, economy and politics was in fact claimed as *vrouesake*. Political know-how ('Wat maak die ministers?' ['What do the ministers do?']) and discussions on education for underprivileged Afrikaans children featured far more prominently than fashion. Her support for the ACVV was reflected in frequent articles on poverty in Cape Town.⁴⁵ Above all, she wrote as a committed

⁴² *Ibid.*, 'Wat is jou werk, O Vrou?', 2 June 1925.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 'Vroue-invloed op verkiesings', 15 April 1924.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

`Nasionale vrou' ['Nationalist woman']: she copiously reported and explained the NVP's activities, and often sought to give direction to NVP policy. She paid particular attention to efforts to promote `leeslus' amongst Afrikaans speakers. A founding member of the (female) `Handhawers' ['Upholders'] group, Rothmann also promoted their determined efforts to have Cape Town shopkeepers serve Afrikaans speakers in their own language.⁴⁶

But *Vrouesake* differed from most of the Afrikaans women's magazines and *Die Huisgenoot*'s women's pages because it reflected a broad interest in women's position. Discussions pertaining to women in *Vrouesake* included a variety of topics and sometimes ranged beyond the confines of South Africa. Van der Lingen's essay sought to explain the concerns of a predominantly English women's organisation with world-wide membership: `Wat bind die vroue van alle wêrelddele aanmekaar? Watter gemeenskaplike belang het hulle dan?' ['What binds the women from all over the world together? What common interests do they have?']⁴⁷ Rothmann discussed women's role in society in such diverse essays as `hoe vaar die vrou in die politiek?' ['how are women doing in politics?'], `die vrou van sake' ['the business woman'], `Boerevrouens op skoolrade' ['farm women on school councils'] and `vroue as predikante' ['women as ministers of the church'].⁴⁸ Throughout the 1920s, Rothmann also published investigative pieces on local attitudes about suffrage. She wrote features on the `women's movement' in countries where women's right to vote had apparently given them more power to influence state policy: `Dis regtig om oor na te dink, watter toestand in ander lande deur die vrouens verander was, en hoe verreikend hulle invloed is' ['It really gives food for thought, how women in other countries have been able to change conditions, and how far-reaching their influence is'].⁴⁹ If she first preferred not to emphasise her own pro-suffrage views in *Vrouesake*, Rothmann always covered the suffrage debate with the implicit assumption that it was simply a matter of time

45 For example, *Die Burger*, `Woningstoestand in Kaapstad', 4 Aug. 1925; `Wat is ons werk werd?', 14 April 1925. See the last section of this chapter for a more detailed discussion.

46 *Ibid.*, `Wat maak die ministers?', 15 July 1924; `Vrouens en volksake', 30 March 1926; `Tagtig uit elke honderd Afrikaners lees nie', 19 Feb. 1924; `Die 80 % wat nie lees nie', 6 Jan. 1925; `Die Handhawers', 14 April 1925, 16 May 1925 and 12 Jan. 1926.

47 *Ibid.*, `Vroue-Verenigings', 26 Aug. 1924. Van der Lingen was discussing the National Council of Women of South Africa.

48 *Ibid.*, `Hoe vaar die vrou in die politiek?', 29 Dec. 1925; `Die vrou van sake', 14 April 1923; `Boerevrouens op skoolrade', 27 April 1926; `Vroue as predikante', 15 May 1928.

49 *Ibid.*, `Vrouestemreg', 23 Jan. 1925; `Vroue-stemreg in Nu-Seeland', 6 May 1924; `Amerikaanse vrouens en die stemreg', 8 April 1924; `Wat is die belangrikste', 22 April 1924; `Die vroue-beweging in Turkye', 26 July 1927; `Kort proses met vroue-stemreg', 26 Feb. 1927; `Die Vroue-parlement', 31 Dec. 1927.

before women had the vote. As female suffrage gained increasing acceptance in the NVP of the mid-1920s, Rothmann's own pro-suffrage views were openly advocated and explained.⁵⁰

Like most Afrikaans women addressing a female audience on political matters, Rothmann wrote in a pervasively gender-specific way, characterising the National Party as 'die mansparty' ['the men's party'] and discussing the issue of the day amongst 'ons vrouens' ['us women']. But she was unusual in her frequent, publicly expressed and often perceptive comments on the gender dynamics between men and women activists as females blurred the boundaries of 'separate spheres'. When the NVP was launched, she emphasised the need for (and women's commitment to) cooperation between the sexes:

Of die vrouens 'n eie party gaan volhou, en of ons uiteindelik met die mans saam in een party werk (wanneer vrouestemreg kom), ons en hulle doel is darem in enig geval, saamwerk.⁵¹

[Whether the women will continue with their own party, or whether we will finally work together with the men in one party (when women have the vote), our purpose and theirs is in any case, cooperation.]

She also insisted on the good relations between Afrikaner men and women. But as she explained two years later, women were often afraid and unsure of themselves, and in spite of their good intentions the men did not quite accept women as their equals:

Die mans begryp ook nog glad nie die plan [van saamwerk] nie, soos dit vir my lyk. Hulle kan maar nie gewoon raak aan die gedagte van 'n gelyk-optredende vrou nie. Hulle beskou ons nog as 'n ander soort mens, en dit bewys hulle deur ons gedurig te prys, en te vertel, en herhaal, en weer te vertel, hoe goed en knap ons is, en hoeveel beter as hulle.... Prys die mans vir mekaar ook so?.... Dit is natuurlik uiters aangenaam om al die mooi waardering te hoor; mens voel so gestreel en so goed en so nobel en ideaal; maar as jy by die huis kom - waar dit nog maar net so staan soos altyd - dan weet jy nie eintlik nie...⁵²

[It seems to me that the men don't understand the plan [of cooperation] at all. They just can't get used to the idea of a woman acting as their equal. They still regard us as a different sort of human being, and they prove this by constantly praising us, and telling us, and repeating, and telling us again, how good and bright we are, and how much better than themselves.... Do the men also praise each other like this?.... It is of course extremely pleasant to hear all the lovely appreciation; one feels so flattered and so good and so noble and so ideal; but when you get home - where things still stand as they always have - then you don't really know...]

While Rothmann chided women for an 'onnodige eerbied' ['unnecessary respect'] for men's political knowledge (they shouldn't take over from men but could also learn to participate), she criticised men for their 'vriendelike minagting' ['friendly contempt'] of female expertise:

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 15 April 1924.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 9 Mei 1922.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 15 April 1924.

Hoewel die mans die nie wil erken nie, en hoewel ons Afrikaner-mans en -vrouens op besonder goeie voet met mekaar staan, tog is dit so dat die vrouesake met minagting beskou word enkel en alleen omdat dit vrouesake is...⁵³

[Although the men don't want to admit this, and although we Afrikaner men and women get along exceptionally well, it is yet true that women's issues are denigrated simply because they are women's issues...]

Not surprisingly for a woman who liked to philosophise on male/female relations, Rothmann found much to admire in Olive Schreiner's work. As she explained in a review of Schreiner's published letters, Afrikaans women with their growing political consciousness and keen eye for injustice could identify strongly with this champion of victimised women:

Ons Afrikaanse vrouens begin nou vorentoe te kom en belang te stel in landsake; ons voel ook oor onreg wat gedaa is soos Olive Schreiner gevoel het.... Dit is iets wat besonder tref in hierdie boek, haar innige liefde en teer gevoel vir vrouens, veral vir enige vrou wat verongelyk was, of wat swaar gekry het. Sy het haar mansvriende baie lief gehad, maar haar innigste liefde, wat sy aan haar kinders sou gegee het as sy kinders gehad het, was aan die vrou gegee. Miskien is dit omdat sy in die eerste plek altyd 'n kampvegter was vir die onderdrukte...⁵⁴

[We Afrikaans women are now beginning to come to the fore and show interest in public affairs; we feel about injustice as Olive Schreiner did.... Very striking about this book is her intense love and tender feeling for women, especially any woman who had been victimised or who had suffered. She loved her men friends very much, but her deepest love, that she would have given to her children if she had children, she gave to woman. Perhaps because she was always in the first place a champion of the oppressed...]

Rothmann therefore expressed strong views on the inevitability of Afrikaans women's political participation, Afrikaner men's inability to accept women as their equals, and clearly supported female suffrage. But hers were the variations of an assertive woman on the *volksmoeder* theme. Speaking to fellow NVP members in *Die Burger*, she emphasised Afrikaans women's 'onafhanklikheidsgevoel' ['spirit of independence']. But as men's partners, their primary role was related to the family - a *volksaak* often undervalued and unrecognised.⁵⁵ NVP members' adoption of the word *burgeres* ['citizeness'] indicated that

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 Jan. 1925.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 'n Ou verwyt', 28 Oct. 1924. Rothmann's main argument was that women's political work often went unrecognised by men who claimed that the money collected came from their husbands' pockets; likewise, the work women did at home - crucial for the *volk* - was unpaid and unrecognised. Compare also Rothmann's discussion of 'Wat is jou werk O Vrou?' ['What is your work, O Woman?'], a poem by Totius (*ibid.*, 2 June 1925). In the poem, Totius's answer to this question commences with 'Om huis vir jou man te hou...' ['To keep house for your husband...'], proceeds with a detailed description of how women should see to the domestic and emotional needs of their husbands, and ends by reminding women that their duties are 'vir die heil van jou volk' ['for the good of your people']. Rothmann explained that she, no stranger to domestic

for them, women's civic identity was based on their essential difference from men. Rothmann spoke as a woman claiming her rights as 'citizenness', but simultaneously, and primarily, as a mother working for the good as the *volk*. A discussion on enfranchised American women's achievements expressed this view:

nou, meer as ooit tevore, moet ons vrouens kennis opdoen, sodat ons goed en verstandig kan oordeel, en regtig ons volk kan dien, as burgeresse sowel as (in die eerste plek!) moeders.⁵⁶

[now, more than ever, we women must educate ourselves, so that we can judge well and sensibly, and really serve our volk, as female citizens as well as (in the first place!) mothers.]

Like her fellow journalists of *Die Boerevrou*, Rothmann distinguished between *mans-politiek* (men's politics) and *vrouesake* (women's issues). And like Malherbe, her maternalist discourse drew on mainstream notions of women's primary role as mother and did not fundamentally challenge the idea of separate spheres. She rather extended women's mothering role beyond the home into areas of public action, thus claiming some direct power for women in a redefined public arena. Her metaphors for women's public work involved a 'domestication of politics'. As with American women in earlier decades, Afrikaner women participated in a distinct female political culture. Based on 'the ideology of domesticity,' this culture 'involved continual expansion of the environs of the "home"'.⁵⁷ The state was a household where women should exercise their (apparently superior) skills to create order:

Dit lyk my die behoefte [aan werk] is daar, reg genoeg; as 'n vrou, 'n gewone normale vrou, iets deurmekaar sien, dan wil sy dit aankant maak. Deurmekaarheid hinder mans nie so veel nie; onbewus ly hulle onder 'n deurmekaar toestand, maar hulle kom nie so ver om dit reg te maak nie. Maar ons moet die hand uitsteek; as ons dit nie doen nie is ons ongelukkig...

Ons vrouens begin nou maar eers gewaar word dat die Staat, soos die huis, baie deurmekaar kan word, en dat ons Afrikaanse Staat nou op die oomblik baie deurmekaar is, en ons ly daaronder.... En ons wil baie graag aan die kant maak.⁵⁸

[It seems to me that the need to work certainly exists; when a woman, an ordinary normal woman, notices disorder, she wants to tidy up. Disorder doesn't bother men as much; unconsciously they suffer from a disordered condition, but they don't manage to deal with this. But we must reach out; if we don't we are unhappy ...

tasks, had nothing against the work itself. One could, however, question 'die verdienstelikheid van die man, en of dit goed vir hom en sy geestelike ontwikkeling is om so baie lyfdiens te ontvang' ['the worthiness of the man, and if it is good for him and his spiritual development to receive so much bodily service'].

56 *Ibid.*, 'Hoe vaar die vrou in die politiek!', 29 Dec. 1925.

57 Paula Baker, 'The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920', *American Historical Review* 89, 3 (1984), pp.631-7.

58 *Die Burger*, 'Wat kan ons doen?', 26 Aug. 1924.

We women are only now realising that the State, like the home, can get very disorderly, that our Afrikaans State is at this moment very disorderly, and we suffer because of this.... And we very much want to tidy up.]

Rothmann's interest in women's rights was also firmly circumscribed by the prerogatives of ethnic nationalism. For all her interest in women's lot and admiration for Schreiner, the interests of a racially defined *volk* came first.⁵⁹ From the mid-'20s, *Vrouesake* covered such burning issues for Afrikaner nationalists as efforts to legislate against 'onsedelike verkeer tussen blanke en naturelle ... ons vrouens voel baie sterk oor hierdie saak' ['immoral intercourse between whites and natives ... we women feel very strongly about this issue'].⁶⁰ Rothmann copiously explained National Party leader Hertzog's views on the danger that enfranchised blacks in the Cape held for the *volk*. *Nasionale vrouens* (Nationalist women) accepted that the 'Segregation Question' was reason enough to postpone women's right to vote:

Ons begryp dat die toeken van stemreg aan die Kaffervrou, met die posisie van vandag, onvermydelik die verhouding tussen blank en swart na verloop van tyd sal verder beswaar; ons voel ook dat om dit toe te ken aan blanke vroue alleen geen goeie staatsmanskap sal bewys nie. Daarom is ons gewillig om te wag tot daar lig op die pad kom. Ons sien met ang die wolke saampak om daardie lig te verduister, en ons wil die ontwikkeling van die segregasie-onderhandelings sorgvuldig volg. Vir ons hang daar besonder veel van af, en nie soveel omdat vrouestemreg daarvan afhang nie, maar omdat die toekoms van ons kinders daarvan afhang...⁶¹

[We realise that granting the vote to the Kaffer woman, in the present situation, would inevitably worsen the relationship between white and black as time passed. We also feel that to give the vote to white women only will not be good statesmanship. Therefore we are willing to wait until light becomes visible on the road ahead. With anxiety we watch how the gathering of clouds threaten to obscure this light, and we want to follow the segregation negotiations with care. To us, a very great deal depends upon this, and not so much because this will determine whether women get the vote but because the future of our children hangs in the balance...]

59 In this respect, Afrikaner women's maternalist rhetoric also resembled that of their white middle-class contemporaries in (for example) the United States. In 'The Power of Motherhood', Eileen Boris compares the divergent projects of black and white female activists in the United States. Both groups extended women's political role in terms of discourses that exalted women's capacity to mother. Both relied on images of motherhood as altruistic, nurturing and protective that 'was embodied in the dominant male-supremacist and racist culture and ... law'. But in the maternalist discourse of most white reformers (as with that of Afrikaner women), 'within the word "mother"... lurked the referent "white" ...'

60 *Die Burger*, 'Die Ontug-Wetsontwerp', 11 May 1926.

61 University of Stellenbosch Document Centre (hereafter USDC), M.E. Rothmann Collection (hereafter MER), 55.L.3 (1), 55.ko.8D ('Vrouesake' clippings collection) 'Die NVP van Kaapstad en Vrouestemreg', c.1928; 'The Afrikaner Attitude towards Women's Suffrage', address to a meeting of the Women's Enfranchisement League, Cape Town, c.1927.

How were such changing attitudes reflected in the ACVV itself? Given *Die Burger*'s support for the National Party in the western Cape, and the frequent appearance of articles on the ACVV and NVP, Rothmann's writing probably shaped the views of many Afrikaans women active in welfare and nationalist politics. More specifically, Rothmann helped to articulate the changing perspectives of a group of primarily urban-based Afrikaner 'new women'. But what of the *platteland*, where the majority of ACVV members lived? Although Rothmann was from a western Cape village, many ideas articulated by this 'verplante boervrou' ('transplanted boer-woman', as she liked to call herself) were probably foreign to the majority of ACVV members.⁶² Who were they, and what motivated them to work for the ACVV?

2. 'Bemiddelde dames', 'Versukkelde Vrouens' (Well-off Ladies, Work-worn Women): ACVV Members in the Rural Cape

For the historian of the ACVV, the first twenty years or so of the organisation's existence remain a story of articulate, middle-class women who often had their views recorded in print. But when Rothmann joined the ACVV, the organisation not only gained someone who recorded her own thoughts on gender and politics, but also a woman with a writer's thoughtful appraisal of the people she met. Her travel diaries, written from 1928 to 1934, offer a rare glimpse of the ACVV's rural membership.

Earlier explanations of their work by ACVV leaders suggested that social work was the obvious place to be involved because theirs was a *women's* organisation. Involvement in this area meant an extension of the nurturing and socialising roles that women were expected to play in Afrikaans communities. But Rothmann reminds one that for many *platteland* women, belonging to the ACVV was often the one available option for active and public community work. In communities where women's place in the gender hierarchy - not least their reproductive role - significantly limited the possibilities for political and professional careers, joining philanthropic (or mission support) organisations was often the only option for women who sought entry into public life. Especially on the *platteland*, the organisation often presented a rare opportunity for activity beyond the confines of home and family. The well-off president of a northern Cape branch, married for the second time, was 'n masterful mens wat nie genoeg te regeer sal hê aan die 10 kinders nie' ['a masterful person

⁶² *Die Burger*, 'Briewe van 'n verplante boervrou', 10 and 24 May 1922.

who won't have enough to rule over with ten children'].⁶³ The secretary of a nearby branch was married to a water driller. 'Hy is ... selde tuis, en die vroujie ... daar by 35 se kant, met 3 kindertjies, het tyd om te dink. Sy trek haar die lot van die arm mense aan ...' ['He is ... seldom at home, and the young woman ... about 35, with 3 small children, has time to think. She is very concerned over the lot of the poor ...']⁶⁴

Women who held central positions were often older, with fewer responsibilities at home, or were employers of domestic servants. Cape Town's president had explained that work for the ACVV filled an otherwise 'idle' existence:

(o)ns ACVV lede het meer vrije tyd als wat ons net aan ons huise bestee, en als 'n bende van vrouwe gee ons die vrije tyd in belang van minderbevooregte en aan maatskaplike werk ... (ons word) op die wijze verlos van 'n ijdele lewe.⁶⁵

[we ACVV members have more time on our hands than we could bestow on our homes, and as a group of women we devote our free time to the less privileged and to social work ... thus we are released from an idle life.]

A western Cape branch visited by Rothmann in 1928 was headed by 'n bemiddelde dame ... haar man werk nie meer nie, sy het nie kinders in die huis nie, het klaarblyklik sterk lus en aanleg vir sosiale werk' ['an affluent lady, her husband no longer works, she has no children at home, is evidently talented and keen to do social work'].⁶⁶ Rothmann's travel diary offered a perceptive description of women she frequently met on her journeys in the *platteland*: '(D)ie sout van die aarde. Nie meer mooi nie, sonder aanlokkingskrag vir mans, gewoonlik onsmaaklik gekleed, ongemaklik, soms byna onooglik, is hulle liefde sterk en mooi - en vind 'n uiting in die ACVV' ['The salt of the earth. No longer attractive, without allure for men, usually tastelessly dressed, uncomfortable, sometimes almost unsightly, their love is strong and beautiful - and finds an outlet in the ACVV'].⁶⁷ In these male-centred communities, the ACVV provided an alternative focus for women who otherwise had no independent public identity. Rothmann's comment to colleague Minni Roome on Freud's theory of sublimation probably referred to her own experience as a single career-woman, as well as those of the ACVV devotees she met on her travels:

Freud se leer omtrent geslagsgevoel is dat dit die bron van menigvuldige uitings van krag is, duisendvormig, en is 'n onskatbare middel tot vooruitgang - 'n 'vital force'. Dat dit 'sublimated' word deur beheer te word, en verander word aan die krag wat

63 Cape Archives (CA), A1953 (Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging Private Collection), A1/2/1 (Rothmann's diary as organising secretary), July 1928.

64 *Ibid.*, July 1928.

65 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/5 (Cape Town), 13 Feb. 1930.

66 CA, A1953, A1/2/1, 1928.

67 *Ibid.*, Sept. 1928.

kunstenaars, hervormers, allerhande werkers inspireer ... is hierdie Freud-leer nie vir jou mooi nie? Dit troos my vir die huweliksgeluk wat ek gemis het - want 'n mens voel na om te dink dat daar in jou êrens liefde ongebruik lê. En nou kan jy dit mos verwerk, deur die genade-Gods, aan dinge wat nie minder nuttig is nie - Dis genoeg om enige spaarsamige huisvrou bly te maak!⁶⁸

[Freud's theory about sexuality is that it is the source of manifold expressions of power, thousandfold, and an immeasurable means for progress - a 'vital force'. That it is 'sublimated' through control, and transformed into the power that inspires artists, reformers, all sorts of workers ... is not this Freudian theory beautiful to you? It is consolation for the happiness in marriage that I missed - because one feels awful to think that somewhere in oneself love lies unused. And now you can transform it, through God's grace, into things that are not less useful - It's enough to gladden the heart of every frugal housewife!]

But on much of the Cape *platteland*, only the families of thinly scattered *dominees* and professionals could claim middle-class status and appurtenances, while farmers struggled to survive. Why, then, did the ACVV acquire a large rural following? For many rural women, it was neither a desire to enter into public life nor (as with Rothmann) sympathy induced by memories of past poverty that prompted them to join the ACVV. Especially in the isolated farming communities of the northern and north-western Cape, the economic circumstances of executive and ordinary members often differed substantially.

While a number of branches in these regions were started in the 1910s and 1920s, a glimpse of their membership was only provided in the late 1920s, when Rothmann travelled for the ACVV and Carnegie Commission. During her research on women's work she interviewed a Namaqualand member of the ACVV, living in a 'vaalhuisie ... eenvoudig gekleed, huis baie skoon hoewel skraps en baie eenvoudig gemeubileer ...'⁶⁹ ['a small cottage... simply dressed, very clean although scantily and very simply furnished ...'] At an ACVV meeting in Niekerkshoop, a northern hamlet, she encountered 'versukkelde vrouens met knoetsige hande...' ['worn-out women with gnarled hands...']⁷⁰ After launching a new branch in a sparsely populated district bordering on the Vaal river, she commented:

Maar die vrouens is afgewerk! Tog darem nie. Hulle stap myle ver in die warm son ... na my vergadering in die Kerk. Uiteraard eenvoudig gekleed, huisies meer as eenvoudig: klein geboutjies van ongepleisterde steen, 1 of 2 vertrekkies, soms met 'n watent langsaan wat ook as slaapkamer dien: plat dakke. Sommige somar hartbeeshuisies - baie...⁷¹

68 USDC, MER, 55.M.K.16(1), M.E. Rothmann to M. Roome, July 19, 1928.

69 USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (2), Garies 33, p.53, 'Bokwerk is vrouewerk'.

70 CA, A1953, A1/2/1, 1928.

71 *Ibid.*, 1928.

[How work-worn the women are! And yet not. They walked for miles in the hot sun ... to my meeting in the church. Dressed very simply, primitive little houses: small buildings of untreated stone, one or two rooms, sometimes with a waggon-hood to serve as another bedroom: flat roofs. Some huts are just wattle-and-daub - many...]

Having met 'dieselfde soort vrouens ... afgeleef voor hulle oud is ...' ['the same kind of women ... exhausted before they are old'] in various northern Cape towns, she mused on the pervasiveness of poverty:

Hulle lyk of hulle hard op die lande werk: miskien is dit ook die isolasie, en die bewustheid van armoed. En tog is hulle nie so brandarm nie en sommige is nogal welvarend. Maar almal het daardie stempel...⁷²

[They seem to work hard on the land: perhaps it is also the isolation, and the awareness of poverty. And yet they are not so very poor and some are fairly well-to-do. But they all have that stamp...]

A complaint from the Philipstown *bestuur* suggests why some of these women joined the organisation: 'dit skyn dat die arm lede graag aansluit, dan kom hulle vergadering-toe as hulle eie versoeke om hulp toegedien word, en intimideer die lede!' ['it seems that poor people are eager to join, they come to the meetings when their own requests for help come up for discussion, and intimidate the members!']⁷³

For the wives of farmers whose hold on the land was often tenuous, or for women whose families had finally moved to town, belonging to the ACVV could mean access to an alternative form of security. In fact, a number of branches bear comparison to the African women's prayer unions which proliferated from the early twentieth century and 'placed women within a network or structure of peer support' while 'familial structures of emotional and material support were coming under pressure...'⁷⁴ The Hopetown branch, 'n alimentasie-buro vir 20 jaar' ['a maintenance bureau for 20 years'], with 'dieselfde mense wat die aalmoese ontvang as lede' ['the same people who received charity as members']⁷⁵ was perhaps an exaggerated case, but many northern branches aided their own members. Requests reflected the needs of women whose lives were dominated by childbearing and poverty. In Kakamas, a woman who approached the ACVV 'om hulp vir

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1928. Rothmann visited Kamieskroon in Namaqualand, and Keimoes, Kenhardt, Kakamas and Marchand in the northern Cape.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Aug. 1928.

⁷⁴ Cherryl Walker, 'Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945: An Overview', in C. Walker (ed.) *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990), p.16. Her remark is based on Debbie Gaitskell's paper in the same volume, 'Devout domesticity? A century of African Women's Christianity in South Africa'.

⁷⁵ CA, A1953, A1/2/2 (Rothmann's diary as organising secretary), Nov. 6, 1930.

('n) gomlastiek kous' ['for an elastic stocking'] (used to support varicose veins) was helped 'terwyl sy vroeër 'n getrouwe lid was' ['because she used to be a faithful member'].⁷⁶ In drought-stricken Namaqualand, branches also supported their own members.⁷⁷ Important decisions were taken by the Kamieskroon executive; the minutes of general meetings primarily recorded members' indecisiveness, long bible-readings and the *domineesvrou*'s attempts to relate the text to lives that were often difficult and harsh. Hence her reminders: 'die Here Jesus (kan ons) lief hê en tuis voel in die huis van elkeen, hoe needrig dit ook al mag wees'; 'ons moet net moed hou. Ons Godsdiens is om ons te bemoedig in tyd van swaar beproewing...' ['The Lord Jesus loves us and feels at home in each of our houses, however humble'; 'We must have courage. Our religion should sustain us in times of hardship...']⁷⁸

In different regions of the Cape, ACVV women with very different social status therefore worked for the organisation. In the more prosperous eastern and western Cape, branches were headed and supported by the wives of farmers and well-off professionals.⁷⁹ In the economically backward northern regions, poor women often belonged to the ACVV. How were the policies advocated by the ACVV's leaders carried out by this varied *platteland* membership?

76 CA, A1953, Add 1/5/6/1/1/1 (Kakamas), Sept. 5, 1933.

77 CA, A1953, Add 1/5/1/1/1/1 (Kamieskroon). On Aug. 1 and Nov. 4 of 1928, 'Hannie Genis' respectively contributed to ACVV funds and received a loan; On Feb. 1, 1929 £1 was given to 'Mej. Hanekom' whose name appears on the list of members included in the minutes book.

78 *Ibid.*, 4 Nov. 1928; 7 Feb. 1929. The decision to establish a clinic and to undertake administration of the local school hostel was never mentioned in the minutes of general meetings, although the minutes from 1928 and 1929 show that such ventures were undertaken.

79 Jeffrey Butler provides an interesting account of the workings of the affluent Cradock branch of the ACVV. See 'Afrikaner Women and the Creation of Ethnicity in a Small South African Town, 1902 - 1950', in L. Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989).

3. The ACVV's Work on the Cape Platteland of the 1920s

At most ACVV meetings of the 1920s, matters proceeded more or less as before. Every year, many women still listed the threats to a shared and conservative morality when they formulated discussion points for the annual congress.⁸⁰ At branch meetings, membership fees were collected, fund-raising efforts planned, and the needs of the local poor discussed. Gifts to the poor sometimes reflected *platteland* notions of propriety: in 1920, the Strijdenburg branch gave 10s. 'vir die meisje wat by oorlede oom Antonie gebly het ... vir e n swart rokie die dag met zy dood' ['for the girl who stayed with the late Oom Antonie ... one black dress for his burial service'].⁸¹ In 1925 a Karoo branch bought a pair of shoes for a widow 'begerig om kerk toe te kom; maar weens behoefte kan sy nie' ['keen to come to church, but due to need she is unable to do so'].⁸² But the purchase of '4 yds Flennelet, 1 paar skoene, 1 kombers en 'n bottel lewens essence' ['4 yards flannel, one pair of shoes, one blanket and a bottle of essence of life'] was more typical of the help that rurally-based ACVV's extended to the poor.⁸³ Local organisations were also part of a female network of support for the elderly and sick. Members often referred to themselves as 'susters' ['sisters']; through the ACVV they performed tasks long assumed by pious women of the Dutch Reformed Church. In 1923 for example, Van Wyksdorp members decided 'dat die plaaslike susters beutelings sal sorre vir eete, vir Wed: Grietje van Wijk vir 'n week...' ['that the local sisters will take turns to provide Widow Grietje van Wijk's meals for a week'].⁸⁴ Several months later the meeting resolved 'om Tant Grietje 'n paar koloniale maak skoene vir krisimis te gee. Ook haar huis te laat skoonmaak' ['to give Aunt Grietje a pair colonial-made shoes for Christmas. Also to have her house cleaned'].⁸⁵ ACVV practice also meshed with the benevolence that farmers' wives sometimes extended towards *bywoners*. In 1929, a northern Cape branch allocated  3 to a member who wanted to aid 'n behoeftige famielie op hul plaas' ['a needy family on their farm'].⁸⁶

80 CA, DRC, V21, 1/1/8, 'Beschrywingspunten voor het Zestiende Kongres, 1924'.

81 CA, A1953, Add 1/12/5/1/1/1 (Strijdenburg) 19 Aug. 1920.

82 CA, A1953, Add 1/14/3/1/1/1 (Van Wyksdorp), 25 July 1925.

83 *Ibid.*, 5 Dec. 1925.

84 *Ibid.*, 13 Jan. 1923.

85 *Ibid.*, 5 Dec. 1923.

86 CA, A1953, Add 1/5/7/1/1 (Kenhardt), 27 July 1929.

White Afrikaans-speaking families in straitened circumstances often knew that they could approach the ACVV, and branches frequently received written requests.⁸⁷ Branch members were also delegated to visit the poor. Members had to report cases of poverty on farms and sections of town allocated to them.⁸⁸ Branches sometimes helped only the 'deserving' poor. When a farmer's wife in the northern Cape applied for help 'al is het oud klederen' ['even old clothes'] in 1922, the ACVV decided 'dat twee zusters gaan om eers onderzoek te doen hoe danig die behoefte is' ['that two sisters must first investigate the extent of her need']. The next meeting decided 'dat ons niets aan hun kan doen' ['that we can do nothing for them'] after a member reported

dat het daar allertreurigs gesteld is doch naar haar inziens is dit nalatigheid want hul heeft tien morgen grond en daaruit kan hul leef ... hun toestand [is] aan traagheid te wyten ... zy [heeft] hun aangemoedigd om vlytiger te werken en daar zal zeker een beter vooruitzig komen...⁸⁹

[That the situation is most miserable but in her opinion, this is due to neglect. They have ten morgen of land and should be able to make a living from it ... their condition is the result of laziness ... she encouraged them to be more industrious; then things would surely improve...]

But branches also applied other criteria in deciding whom to help. Through the network that linked rural and urban branches, a nationalist message was being proclaimed. At ACVV congresses, women's duty to those members of the *volk* less fortunate than themselves was stressed.⁹⁰ *Die Huisgenoot*, which reserved space for the ACVV and was circulated by many rural branches, publicised the plight of aged 'voortrekkermoeders', complete with sombre photographs of women dressed in black, intricate genealogies and complicated explanations of their part in the heroic past.⁹¹ The message was that while the wrong skin-colour or home language excluded people from belonging to the *volk*, economic status did not.

87 For example, 3 Sept. 1920, 3 Sept. 1925 (Upington); 3 Feb. 1923 (Cradock); CA, A1953, Add 1/5/5/1/1/1 (Keimoes), 15 March 1922; Add 1/14/3/1/1/1 (Van Wyksdorp), 8 July 1929; Add 1/12/5/1/1/1 (Strijdenburg), 3 Sept. 1921.

88 3 Nov. 1923, 9 Aug. 1924 (Cradock); CA, A1953, Add 1/12/8/1/1/1 (Steytlerville), 5 Oct. 1929; 4 Nov. 1924 (Upington).

89 CA, A1953, Add. 1/5/5/1/1/1 (Keimoes), 4 March 1922, 15 April 1922. See also Add 1/12/5/1/1/1 (Strijdenburg), 2 Sept. 1921; 3 Aug. 1920 (Upington).

90 CA, A1953, Add 1/2/3/1/1 (Beaconsfield), 17 Sept. 1907.

91 *Die Huisgenoot*, 26 May 1921. The Upington branch minutes of Feb. 1927 noted that 'die Presidente lees iets banje belangriks voor uit die Huisgenoot' ['the President read something very important from *Die Huisgenoot*']. The Cradock branch minutes of 6 May 1922 recorded that the President urged members to subscribe to *Die Huisgenoot* or *De Goede Hoop*.

The activities of rural branches certainly reflected the general tendency amongst Afrikaner nationalists to ethnicise poverty. For the most part, they specifically considered the needs of Afrikaans-speaking whites. But *hoofbestuur* was also well aware that '... afgeleë en swak takkies soms ['n] baie verkeerde begrip oor die manier van optree van die ACVV het' ['remote and weak branches sometimes have very mistaken notions about the policy and activities of the ACVV'].⁹² Religious affiliation defined community for many *platteland* members, and sometimes determined whether people qualified for help. As Kamieskroon put it, 'laat ons goeddoen aan allen, maar meest aan de huisgenoten des geloofs' ['let us show charity to everyone, but most of all to our fellow members of the household of faith'].⁹³ Beaconsfield's hospital committee visited people 'van onze kerk' ['of our church'].⁹⁴ In 1928, ACVV members from a northern town where strife between the local Dutch Reformed and Reformed ('Dopper') Churches was particularly intense, were reprimanded for helping only Dutch-Reformed members.⁹⁵

English speakers were sometimes assisted, and occasionally the more isolated branches even extended help to blacks. Strijdenburg's minutebook recorded help for a black woman in idiosyncratic Afrikaans that suggested little exposure to Afrikaner nationalist print culture: 'en bydraë ver én ou Meed van omtrent 108 jare. 3 Jaarts Flennelnet is toe aan haar gegee...' ['a contribution for an old coloured servant of about 108 years. 3 Yards flannel was given to her...']⁹⁶ As late as 1937 the Kakamas ACVV's minutes would record that the treasurer had given 5s. worth of 'groen kroek' (a patent medicine) to a 'gekleurde sieke' ['coloured invalid'].⁹⁷ Adherence to the morals of Afrikaans church and society sometimes

92 CA, A1953, A1/2/5 (Rothmann's diary as organising secretary), undated.

93 CA, A1953, Add 1/5/1/1/1/1 (Kamieskroon), 7 Sept. 1928.

94 CA, A1953, Add 1/2/3/11/1 (Beaconsfield), 23 May 1919.

95 CA, A1953, A1/2/1, June 1928.

96 CA, A1953, Add 1/12/5/1/1/1 (Stijdenburg), 9 March 1918.

97 CA, A1953, Add 1/5/6/1/1/1 (Kakamas), 3 Nov. 1937. In 1931, Kenhardt also gave funds to 'Mej. Ella Hugo, die Sending dame' ['Miss Ella Hugo, the Missionary lady'] for the 'Meidjes Tehuis', apparently an institute for destitute black girls. The minutes for 14 March reported a letter from Miss Hugo explaining that 'die meidjie wat deur ons ondersteun word, en sonde geval het, en dat daar een ander in haar plek is opgeneem' ['the girl who we supported has fallen into sin and another has taken her place']. The work of this ACVV branch evidently overlapped with that of the Vroue Sending Bond. On 6 July 'elke Kerkraadsvrouw' ['every church councilor's wife'] was encouraged to do missionary work amongst their servants (CA, A1953, Add 1/5/7/1/1).

counted for more than skin colour: when a Grikwastad widow with several children obtained a pension through the ACVV, her parentage (she had an African father) did not affect their decision. However, upon learning that she expected an illegitimate child the branch sought *hoofbestuur*'s advice - the latter recommended that the pension be cancelled.⁹⁸

Rural branches still furthered cultural nationalism as well as ethnically circumscribed philanthropy. Some branches spelt out their aim to teach the recipients of their help that they belonged to the *volk*. As the Worcester branch wrote:

Inderdaad, daar is nog veel werk te doen, nog veel te ly en te stry om ons Volk te veredel om die hoogste en beste ideale voor te hou, want is daar nie nog talle van ons volksgenote wat nasionaal en geestelik wakker geskud en bearbei moet word nie?⁹⁹

[Indeed, there is still much work to be done, much to suffer in the struggle to ennoble our People and to hold up the highest and best ideals, for are there not still many of our fellow people who must be awakened nationally and spiritually?]

The ACVV also gave books to schools, in order to exert 'n goeie invloed ... op die huisgesinne waaruit (die kinders) kom' ['a good influence on the families of the children'].¹⁰⁰ By 1928, even isolated Kamieskroon was holding its bazaars on Dingaans Day, that holiest of days in the Afrikaner nationalist calendar.¹⁰¹

But if most *platteland* branches continued to extend piecemeal help to the poor, more systematic approaches to deal with poverty also emerged in a number of towns. Throughout the 1920s, rural branches were still preoccupied with the provision of education for the poor. Parents from rural villages often sent their children away to schools in larger towns. They went to school hostels, industrial schools or the ACVV's *huishoudskole* (domestic work schools). The context was a general focus on white children's education from government and church alike, and a growing network of industrial schools. Prompted by the DRC, provincial government now subsidised privately run school hostels for poor white children. A number of school hostels were founded by the church.¹⁰²

98 CA, A1953, A1/2/4 (Rothmann's diary as organising secretary), 1937.

99 *Die Huisgenoot*, March 1920, p.361.

100 *Ibid.*, Oct. 1920, p.267.

101 CA, A1953, Add. 1/5/1/1/1 (Kamieskroon), Dec. 1928.

102 H.C. Lambrechts and Erika Theron, *Vrouevolksdiens* (Cape Town: HAUM, nd c.1956), p.106.

Throughout the 1920s the *huishoudskole* were still thought to fulfil an all-important task in teaching impoverished girls the skills of motherhood (*see plate 21*). An ACVV member who visited a *huishoudskool* in 1920 proudly reported that 'overall krijgt men de indruk dat elk kind word ingeprent: schoonheid, preciesheid, orde en wet...' ['everywhere one gets the impression that every child is taught cleanliness, precision, order and law...']¹⁰³ As another enthusiastic supporter of the schools said, 'vang ze jong en men kan alles van hen maken' ['catch them young and you can make anything of them'].¹⁰⁴ In the controlled environment of the schools, girls could be moulded into Afrikaners. In Rothmann's words, they were taught by

vrouens wat die kinders ken, en hulle ouers ken, en hulle voorgeslagte ken, en hulle taal praat en weet dat hulle nie aan 'n aparte klas gebore is nie, maar van dieselfde stof is as al wat Afrikaner is.¹⁰⁵

[women who know the children, their parents and their forebears, and speak their language and know that they were not born to a separate class, but are of the same fabric as are all Afrikaners.]

Some of the schools were indeed run by women who answered to this description - executive member Ida Theron was in charge of the Tulbagh school. Behind closed doors however, the ACVV executive worried that inadequately trained matrons caused many problems at some *huishoudskole*. By the late 1920s the ACVV executive struggled against punitive disciplinary regimes ('n ongesonde atmosfeer van dwang' [an unhealthy atmosphere of coercion]).¹⁰⁶

Children's education in schools far from their home was certainly a necessity for many families from remote rural villages and farms. Many parents consented to the ACVV's suggestions, or approached the ACVV themselves.¹⁰⁷ Sometimes, the ACVV's decision to help them was accompanied by a sensitivity to the fact that poor mothers had to work and needed child care. An Upington woman's request for help was met with the ACVV's suggestion that her children be sent away 'sodat Mev. Mostert haar hande meer vry kon wees om te werk' ['so that Mrs Mostert's hands could be more free for work'].

103 *Die Huisgenoot*, July 1920, p.104.

104 *Ibid.*, April 1917.

105 *Die Burger*, 'Kindersorg. Die Huishoudskole van die ACVV', 10 March 1924.

106 CA, DRC, V21, 1/3 (ACVV executive minutes), 18 Feb. 1928. Also 13 Feb. 1928; CA, A1953, A1/2/1, May 1928.

107 This was a continuation of an earlier trend (Sept. 1912, 26 Jan. 1913, 6 Dec. 1916, 8 April 1930 (Upington)). Some parents refused to send their children away (CA, A1953, A1/12/5/1/1/1 (Strijdenburg), 14 March 1921).

But from the early 1920s, the *huishoudskole* could also receive children committed to the care of the state by magistrates. Indeed, branches now liaised with local magistrates in order to extract children and young women from surroundings they deemed inappropriate.¹⁰⁸ Many ACVV branches were convinced that poverty was best dealt with by removing children from impoverished homes. Indeed, the third domestic work school, founded in 1920, accepted children who were between six and thirteen years old. According to the ACVV, girls who came to school at fourteen as was the rule at the older schools often returned 'na hulle ou omgewing' ['to their old environment'] and forgot all they had been taught.¹⁰⁹ In fact, being recognised and treated as part of the 'imagined community' of the *volk* at the schools was not always enough. Visits to parents also had to be restricted.¹¹⁰

A number of branches also financed their own hostels. The relatively affluent Cradock branch started a hostel for girls - frequent applications to subsidise school fees and provide clothes for hosteldwellers attested to their poverty.¹¹¹ By the late 1920s, several branches were running their own hostels or administering those funded by churches. While institutions in the eastern and western Cape may well have given some children a chance to escape from impoverished backgrounds, their northern counterparts often reflected branches' lack of funds. Visiting the hostel in Keimoes, Rothmann commented - 'o, so primitief en gebrekkig is alles, so armoedig lyk die kindertjies!' ['oh, how primitive and insufficient everything is, and how impoverished the little children look!'] The state of nearby Richie's boarding school had her exclaim:

108 In *Die Huisgenoot* of Aug. 1920 (p.157) the ACVV executive announced that they were taking steps to have the Worcester institution 'certified' so that children committed to the care of the state under the Children's Protection Act could be sent there. Branches soon negotiated with magistrates to have children committed to the ACVV schools and to state-run industrial schools. For example, see 4 Sept. 1923, 6 July 1928, 4 March 1930 (Upington); 3 May 1920, 4 March 1922 (Cradock).

109 *Die Huisgenoot*, Sept. 1920, p.211.

110 CA, A1953, Add. 1/5/5/1/1/1 (Keimoes), 5 Feb. 1921. From the first, school rules specified that parents had to hand their children over to the schools for at least three years, and that they would not allow children to go home except in exceptional circumstances. The 1923 *hoofbestuur* minutes recorded: '(b)esloten Mev. Wallis te vragen haar kinderen by 'De Ark' niet zo dikwels 'n besoek te brengen, daar dit geen goede invloed uitoefenen' ['it was decided to ask Mrs Wallis not to visit her children at 'De Ark' so often, as this has no good influence on them']. (CA, DRC, V21, 1/1, 9 Feb. 1923). In the 1930s, some children were still not allowed to visit their families during holidays (CA, DRC, V21, 1/5, 4 Dec. 1934).

111 3 Dec. 1921; 3 Feb. 1923; 24 Nov. 1923; 7 May 1927 (Cradock).

Ag Hemeltjie, die *stempel* van armoed wat op sommige van die plekke is - met so te sê geen spoor van wat skoon of lieflik is nie. Met watter herinnerings moet die meisiekinders veral terug gaan na hulle armoedige omgewings...¹¹²

[Oh Heavens, how indelibly some of these places are *branded* with poverty - with hardly a trace of loveliness. With what memories must especially the girls return to their impoverished surroundings...]

Even so, she commented on the contrast between northern Cape girls who had been to boarding-schools ('hulle is soos enige ander opgevoede Afrikaner meisies' ['they are like any other educated Afrikaner girls']) and their work-worn mothers.

An entirely novel project for the ACVV was also initiated in a small northern Cape village in 1926, where the ACVV began to organise for a clinic that would provide maternity care.¹¹³ The project was inspired not only by the local absence of medical personnel, but also by national campaigns for *volksgesondheid* (the health of the *volk* or public health) supported by the ACVV leadership at this time. Campaigns around *volksgesondheid* had been launched from 1925, soon after D.F. Malan became the Pact government's Minister of Public Health. In common with many countries across the world, the emphasis was on infants' health.¹¹⁴ Malan's announcement that the growth of South Africa's white

112 CA, A1953, A1/2/1, Aug. 1928, original emphasis.

113 Lambrechts and Theron, *Vrouevolksdiens*, p.82.

114 'The politicisation of women's traditional work of child care' (in Molly Ladd-Taylor's words) has been the subject of diverse studies. V. Field et al (eds), *Women and Children First: International Maternal and Infant Welfare, 1870-1945* (London: Routledge, 1992) give some idea of the scope of 'the international maternal and infant welfare movement'. Afrikaner state officials' highlighting of infant mortality as an issue of national concern took place when a similar post-war British imperialist discourse was already well established. See also Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop Journal* 6 (1978). Susan Pedersen's *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State, Britain and France 1914-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) discusses the role of pronatalists concerned about a relatively low French Birthrate in the introduction of 'family allowances' from the First World War onwards. Alisa Klaus provides a comparative perspective in 'Depopulation and Race Suicide: Maternalism and Pronatalist Ideologies in France and the United States' in S. Koven and S. Michel (eds) *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Molly-Ladd Taylor's *Mother-work: Women, Child Welfare and the State 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994) shows that 'maternal and child health was a major women's issue' in the United States of the 1910s and 1920s. She discusses a brief experiment in federally supported maternal and child health care that lasted from 1921 to 1929. Many studies emphasise the important role of women in making infant and maternal mortality matters for public discussion and policy. It is however not clear whether the differences in emphasis between some Afrikaner male and female campaigners were echoed by protagonists in other countries (see my discussion of van der Lingen's views above). Another collection of essays, R. Cooter (ed.) *In the Name of the Child. Health and Welfare, 1880-1940* (London: Routledge, 1992) adds an interesting dimension to the debate by exploring 'the politics of talking about children'. As Seth Koven's review explains (*History*

population was threatened by high infant mortality rates was widely publicised. As *Die Burger* noted, 'Die verskriklike kindersterfte ... is 'n saak wat aan die wortels van ons volkslewe raak, 'n saak wat reeds te lank verwaarloos is...' ['The terrible infant mortality ... is an issue that touch the roots of our people's existence, a matter that has already been neglected for too long...']¹¹⁵

In the flurry of editorials and interviews with politicians and doctors that followed Malan's revelation, infant mortality was largely seen as *vrouesaak*. *Die Burger* noted that the work against child mortality was 'n saak wat ons lesers en veral ons leseresse ... na aan die hart lê', ['an issue close to our readers' hearts and especially our female readers'] and urged 'veral die Hollandssprekende vroue' ['especially the Dutch-speaking women'] to launch appropriate campaigns.¹¹⁶ As E.C. van der Lingen, executive member of Cape Town's ACVV, noted in *Die Huisgenoot*:

Die dreigende pes het ons skielik wakker gemaak om aandag te gee aan die kwessie van Volksgesondheid; en toe kom daar nog die skrikwekkende kindersterftesyfer. Hieroor was daar baie geskrywe en gepraat en die indruk by 'n mens gelaat dat die mans meen dat die vroue moet die ding regmaak.¹¹⁷

[The threat of epidemics suddenly drew our attention to the issue of *Volksgesondheid*; and then the alarming child mortality rates were also announced. This was much discussed and written about and one was left with the impression that the men think the women must set this matter right.]

Van der Lingen was critical of men who seemed to have arrived at this conclusion because they thought women responsible for infant deaths. Prominent doctor-politician A.J. Stals, for example, attributed the high mortality rates to ignorant women who spread infection through 'slordigheid en vuilheid' ['sloppiness and filth'] or turned to 'verfoeilike kunsvoeding' ['detestable bottle-feeding'] because breast-feeding was inconvenient. ('Die moeder wat haar eerste moederplig versuim, versuim haar godsdien. Sy verdien nie 'n greintjie simpatie' ['The mother who neglects her first maternal duty, neglects her religion. She deserves not a grain of sympathy']).¹¹⁸ In contrast, Van der Lingen believed that

Workshop Journal 35 (1993)), these essays explore the ways in which professional and class interests crucially shaped child welfare. Especially pertinent for this study of nationalism is Cathy Unwin and Elaine Sharland's essay on popular children's advice literature, which demonstrates close links between changing ideas about how to raise children and issues of national identity.

115 *Die Burger*, 'Bestryding van die Pes', 13 Feb. 1925; 'Gevaar van die Pes', *Die Burger*, 6 March 1925.

116 *Ibid.*, 9 March 1925; 26 Feb. 1925.

117 *Die Huisgenoot*, 27 March 1925, p.28.

118 *Die Burger*, 'Beskerm die Kinderlewens', 9 March 1925. In 'Gender and Nationalism in Bengal' (*Gender and History* 5, 2 (1993) Samita Sen suggests an interesting comparative perspective. She shows that from the late nineteenth century, a 'barrage of advice and prescriptive

poverty and women's inability to control the number and frequency of pregnancies were primarily responsible for their inability to care properly for their children. But she accepted that this aspect of *volksgesondheid* was women's special responsibility and that the crucial task was to spread knowledge of proper child care.¹¹⁹

Given female Afrikaner nationalists' active participation in the construction of a *volksmoeder* discourse, their acceptance of infant mortality as a *vrouesaak* was hardly surprising. When discussing the problem, women stressed that their importance to the *volk* stemmed from their ability to produce and nurture its future members. It followed that their public campaigns should strive to improve female skills in this respect. As an impassioned female correspondent to *Die Burger* put it:

... die vrou se roeping is om moeder te wees ... (maar) wat word gedoen vir die toekomstige Afrikaner moeder, die akker waarop die Afrikaner-nasie moet verbou word? Absoluut niks! Die arme skepseltjies wat eendag ons nasie moet uitmaak, word gebore, soos in die bevrugting, die natuur moet alleen werk en net so was hulle op, op die beginsel van "God's water op God's akker"

Alvorens 'n meisie moeder word, wat weet sy van haar toekomstige funksies af buite wat sy van die meide in die kombuis leer? Niks!.... As dit moontlik en noodsaaklik is om die toekomstige vader al die wetenskappe in die wereld te leer ... dan is dit nog makliker en noodsaakliker om die toekomstige moeder die elementêre beginsels van moederskap te leer as waarborg om 'n gesonde nasie en nasionale ontwikkeling...¹²⁰

[... woman's calling is to be a mother ... what is being done for the Afrikaner mother-to-be, the field on which the Afrikaner nation must be cultivated? Absolutely nothing! The poor creatures who must one day make up our nation are born, as they are conceived, nature must work alone, and so they grow up, on the principle of 'letting things run their course'.

Before a girl becomes a mother, what does she know of her future role, besides that which she learns from the maids in the kitchen? Nothing!.... If it is possible and necessary to teach the father-to-be all the sciences in the world ... then it is still easier and more necessary to teach the mother-to-be the elementary principles of motherhood, and so guarantee a healthy nation and national development...]

norms on child-rearing' was directed at mothers - the progenitors and educators of future citizens. By the 1920s, nationalists anxious about high infant mortality rates targeted poor and working-class women. However, Bengalese nationalists blamed supposedly neglectful, ignorant mothers instead of poverty and lack of access to medical services. They launched 'mothercraft' campaigns instead of supporting state social welfare measures. Sen holds that male politicians and professionals were behind such campaigns, but although her account mentions health visitors, nurses and trained midwives who were presumably female, she does not comment on women's role in these projects. She also does not indicate whether female nationalists were involved.

119 *Die Burger*, 27 March 1925.

120 *Ibid.*, 17 Jan. 1925.

Van der Lingen's personal contribution was a series of articles on aspects of health care in *Die Huisgenoot*. As editor of *Die Boerevrou*, Mabel Malherbe was also well positioned to promote her message that 'die toekoms van ons volk berus by die moeders' ['the future of our people is in the hands of the mothers'] with a series on the practicalities of domestic health, appropriately entitled 'Dienende Liefde' ['Love that Serves'].¹²¹

But both women were convinced that to print information in popular magazines was not enough if impoverished and ignorant mothers were to be taught 'moederkunde' or 'moederkennis', as 'mothercraft' was called in the fast-growing Afrikaans literature on child care.¹²² As Malherbe urged in an open letter in *Vrouesake*, the participation of Afrikaans women's organisations was crucial:

Om die dinge mees doeltreffend te maak, moet ons ons mense bereik deur middel van blaaië en verenigings wat hulle *ken* en *vertrou*.... Elke Afrikaanse vrou ken die verenigings, en al behoort 'n enkele nie daaraan nie, tog weet hulle *vas* dat wat daardie verenigings almal beoog, is die geestelike en stoflike vooruitgang van ons volk. Ek dink dus dat, waar ons die plattelandse bevolking op die gebied van gesondheidsleer wil onderrig, moet ons so ver moontlik deur middel van dié groot en invloedryke verenigings werk...¹²³

[To make these things as effective as possible, we should reach our people through papers and organisations they *know* and *trust*.... Every Afrikaans woman knows the organisations, and even if a particular one does not belong to them, they know for *certain* that all those organisations aim for the spiritual and material progress of our *volk*. I therefore think that, if we want to educate the rural population in the field of hygiene, we have to work, where possible, through these large and influential organisations...]

Rothmann agreed that it was no longer appropriate for women's organisations to do loosely defined philanthropic work: 'nou sal ons vrouens moet begin spesialiseer' ['now we women will have to start specialising'].¹²⁴

The ACVV promptly heeded the call. At its next congress in 1925, the organisation decided to launch *volksgesondheid* committees. Countryside branches of the ACVV were to approach (for example) representatives of local government, church councillors and the local

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 27 March 1925; *Die Huisgenoot*, 'Vir die Vrouens: Volksgesondheid. Insekte en Siektes', 17 July 1925, p.53; *Die Boerevrou*, 'Dienende Liefde: Kinderversorging, Tuisverpleging en Voedingsleer', May 1924, p.4, June 1924, p.11.

¹²² Mabel Malherbe wrote in *Die Boerevrou* (Jan. 1926, p.13) that a word of her own invention, 'moederkennis' ['mother-knowledge'] was similar to the English 'mothercraft'. While some used 'moederkuns' ['mother-art or mothercraft'] she preferred 'kennis' ['knowledge'] 'omdat't meer aankom op kennis, op wetenskap, as op kuns' ['because it is more about knowledge, about science, than art'].

¹²³ *Die Burger*, 17 March 1925, p.9.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

doctor to serve on the committee. Its main task would be to finance the training of nurses who would return to work in rural areas. Again, Afrikaans-speaking women's involvement with health issues was couched in language stressing the kinship of the *volk*:

Dit is seker 'n stap in die regte rigting, want wie kan beter sorg en planne maak vir die arme moeders en hulle kindertjies, wie kan dinge vir hulle beter duidelik maak, of wie voel meer vir hulle as dié vroue wat `vlees is van hulle vlees en been van hulle been'?¹²⁵

[It is certainly a step in the right direction, because who can better care for and make plans for the poor mothers and their little children, who can better explain things to them, who feels more for them than these women, who are `flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone?']

A number of branches responded to the new directives from the ACVV executive. In 1926 for example, Cradock decided to extend their `gesondheidswerk' ['health work'] at the local industrial school, to distribute `health' pamphlets and ask local doctors to address their meetings.¹²⁶

For all the ACVV's enthusiasm for children's health however, the Pact government apparently ignored the Afrikaans women's organisation in favour of cooperation with the predominantly English National Council for Child Welfare. Founded in 1924 at the behest of the Department of Labour, the NCCW combined local branch representation with (majority) representation from several government departments. As a *Federale Vroue Raad* representative lamented in 1926, Malan praised Child Welfare as if theirs was the first and only contribution: `Ek was kwaad en hartseer.... 'n Mens sou sê dat niemand nog ooit 'n vinger op getel het om iets vir 'n kind in Suid Afrika te doen tot die Kinderwelvaart gestig was ...' ['I was angry and sad.... One would think that no one ever lifted a finger to do anything for children in South Africa until Child Welfare was founded...']¹²⁷ Malan refused

125 *Die Huisgenoot*, 18 Sept. 1925, p.45.

126 24 Sept. 1926 (Cradock).

127 Institute for Contemporary History (ICH), PV229 (Federale Vroue Raad Collection), 2/14/1/1/1, undated letter (referring to 1926 NCCW conference) from `F. W.' to Mrs Nicol. An article in *Ons Vaderland* (15 Oct. 1926) similarly discusses Malan's ignorance of the Church's and women's organisations' involvement in social welfare work for children. Rothmann provides a rather jaundiced account of `die mag en invloed' ['the power and influence'] of Child Welfare and the way an English-dominated state administration ignored Afrikaans organisations. Founded by `old Miss Elliot' in 1918, it was sympathetically received by the then Minister of Health. As she explains (with particular reference to the NCCW's founding congress in 1926): `If you are asking how they obtained their position of power, the recipe is: 1. You must have the normal English conviction that no one else is doing work in this field: if you've perhaps heard of something you don't take notice and therefore - it doesn't exist. So it was evidently with the dear good Miss Elliot and with [Minister of Interior] Duncan and [Secretary of Health] Mitchell... 2. (recipe) You must

to deal directly with the Afrikaans women's organisations but suggested that they affiliate with the NCCW.

Instead, the FVR initiated the founding of another body, the *Federale Raad vir Moederkuns en Kindersorg* (The Federal Council for Mothercraft and Child Care). The FRMK united several Afrikaans organisations involved in child welfare. Besides the women's organisations, the DRC's *Armesorg* (poor relief committee) also joined. Subsequent attempts to co-ordinate campaigns with the NCCW through a 'joint commission' was fraught with difficulty.¹²⁸ The ACVV's project would only take on significant proportions from 1928, when new legislation made more funds for health-related welfare projects (targeting whites) directly available to the Afrikaans women's organisations.

4. The ACVV and the Making of 'Afrikaner' Subjects in the Rural Cape

Such were the plans and frustrations of leading ACVV members. But to what extent did the rural ACVVs' selective philanthropy, alarmist stories and cultural activities contribute to the construction of 'Afrikaner' subjects? The extent to which ACVV members themselves identified with Afrikaner nationalism appears to have been uneven. If for some women the links cultivated with other regions signified their belonging to a nation-wide *susterskap* stretching even beyond the Cape, the 'imagined community' of others was still religious rather than nationalist. Even in the late 1920s, many northern Cape women regarded their ACVV activities as but an extension of their duties to the church. At a number of branches, meetings of the Dutch-Reformed administered *Vroue Sending Bond* were merged with those of the ACVV, and presidents talked as much about 'ons verantwoordelikheid teenoor die heidenwereld' ['our responsibility towards the heathens'] as about the plight of poor Afrikaners.¹²⁹ Members were often keener to donate funds to the church than to contribute to philanthropy: in 1928, Kamieskroon voted to collect money towards payment of the

have ministerial backing, and also the conviction that all ministerial backing is English, and will always be in omnia saecula saeculorum so that it is unnecessary to take cognisance of alien elements like the Dutch Church and the ACVV. Just like our ministers who from the beginning said, come along with the English if you want to request something.... We never really counted at the government offices ... before Kuschke arrived with the founding of Social Welfare.' USDC, 55.M.1.K.L (20) M.E. Rothmann to H.C. Lambrechts, 25 Oct. 1953 (my translation).

128 ICH, PV229, 2/14/1/1/1, 28 Feb. 1927, Mrs Nicol (Secr. FVR) to F. Web (Bond van Afrikaanse Moeders); 21 May 1927, Nicol to K. Louw (Secr. ACVV); USDC, 55.k.G.3, Oct. 1928, M.E. Rothmann to Albertus Geyer.

129 CA, A1953, Add 1/5/7/1/1 (Kenhardt), 13 Feb. 1928; 16 Jan. 1929.

church's debts rather than for the needs of the local poor, and gave little heed to a visiting *domineesvrou*'s concern about 'die toestand van ons Afrikanervolk' ['the condition of our Afrikaner people'].¹³⁰

In the same year, when northern branches received their first ever visit from a *hoofbestuur* member, Rothmann told a 'one-idea'd' Keimoes that it should not give 'so elke jaar alles aan die kerk' ['everything to the church every year'] but also fund 'iets anders plaasliks' ['some other local cause'].¹³¹ In nearby Postmasburg, Dutch-Reformed (and exclusively South African Party) ACVV members refused admission to the (Nationalist) women from the Reformed Church. Hence Rothmann's explanation in 1928: 'die idee dat die ACVV 'n NG Kerkbeweging is is foutief; dit is 'n volksbeweging...' ['the notion that the ACVV is a movement of the Dutch Reformed Church is mistaken; it is a movement of the *volk*...']¹³²

How can this failure of an organisation that espoused nationalist principles to reach many of its own members be explained? Geoffrey Eley has rightly observed that 'the most satisfying accounts of nationalism have related it to the uneven development of ... capitalism, or (in an alternative notation) to the problems of modernisation.'¹³³ As Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido have argued, the emergence of nationalist movements in early twentieth century South Africa can be seen as responses to late nineteenth century industrialisation and imperialism: 'although there is no automatic and immediate relationship, transformations of the economy have led to shifts in the nature of ideologies as the material basis for belief systems have changed'. Marks and Trapido also point to the regionally varied and uneven nature of economic change.¹³⁴ The northern Cape with its comparatively backward agriculture was also the area where older notions of community persisted in the 1920s. As Ernest Gellner has argued, it is only once the economic and political penetration by a global economy and a centralising polity of previously more or less inward-turned communities has

130 CA, A1953, Add 1/5/1/1/1 (Kamieskroon), 26 Feb. 1928.

131 CA, A1953, A1/2/1, Aug. 1928.

132 *Ibid.*, June 1928.

133 G. Eley, 'State Formation, Nationalism and Political Culture in nineteenth-century Germany' in R. Samuel and G.S. Jones (eds), *Culture, Ideology and Politics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p.278. Eley was, however, referring to studies of nationalist movements in Europe.

134 Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, 'The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism' in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987), p.2.

been accomplished that people become receptive to nationalist ideas.¹³⁵ Not only did the relative weakness of transport and communications network in the northern Cape inhibit the spread of the print culture so essential to the transmission of nationalist ideas, but capitalist economic relations were not sufficiently established to provide the material basis that facilitated the exchange of regional, parochial loyalties for those of nationalism. Instead, older and relatively unreconstructed networks of female support and church-based traditions of sisterly help for the poor persisted through the ACVV.

The organisation certainly helped to transform impoverished people in the eyes of middle-class men and women. This was in itself an important project. Nationalist politicians realised that a *volksbeweging* (people's movement) could only take off if it incorporated the struggling farmers and *bywoners* on the *platteland*, and particularly the rapidly growing numbers of Afrikaans-speaking proletarians in the cities. The pictures of impoverished *oude moeders* (old mothers) in *Die Huisgenoot* represent just some of the efforts by Afrikaner nationalists to convince their largely middle-class readers that the victims of war-time devastation and rural transformation were also Afrikaners.¹³⁶

Moreover, the ACVV's practice of targeting white Afrikaans speakers for help may well have contributed to a transformation of the image that poor, Afrikaans-speaking whites had of themselves. In this respect, the organisation did not act in ideologically neutral terrain. Rather, it operated alongside church, youth and party-political organisations with similar

135 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p.42.

136 This issue had received publicity in the Dutch-Afrikaans press from around 1916, when the DRC held its first *volkskongres* (people's congress) on the subject of poor whites (a subsequent congress was also held in 1923). *De Volkstem* of that year published a series on poor whites (the pieces were also published in *Verloren en Herwonnen Levens* (Pretoria: Die Volkstem, 1919) by L. Rompel-Koopman. *Die Brandwag* published articles that cast elderly impoverished whites as *voortrekkers* from 1916. *Die Huisgenoot* publicised the problem of *arme blanken* from 1919. Discussions on the subject also appeared in the ACVV pages of the latter publication (for example, Aug. 1919, p.466; Aug. 1919, p.120; Oct. 1919, p.180). *De Kerkbode* also stressed the need for 'opheffing van de armen' ['upliftment of the poor'] from the mid-1910s. See for example an article linking Dingaan's Day to the need to combat poverty (11 Dec. 1919, p.1314). Numerous articles on the church's *Inwendige Zending* (Internal Mission) discussed such issues as its efforts to 'rescue' white children from 'bruin etc.' ['brown etc.'] families (6 Nov. 1919, pp.1155, 1189); education on the *platteland* (25 Sept. 1919, p.1015); a campaign in DRC congregations to publicise the need for upliftment amongst 'verarmde en verachte geloofsgenooten' ['impoverished and deprived members of the faith'] and to collect money for *Inwendige Zending* (2 Jan. 1919). The National Party had also campaigned around the issue of white poverty from the mid-1910s. From at least the mid-1920s, Rothmann's writing on poverty was complemented by articles in *Die Burger* on poverty in Namaqualand and other drought-stricken areas of the Cape (see Chapter Three, footnote 35).

messages. But perhaps a women's organisation that urged members to visit the local poor and to encourage them with *'n vriendelik woord en handdruk van hun mede Afrikaners'* [*'a friendly greeting and encouragement from their fellow Afrikaners'*]¹³⁷ had more impact on impoverished and frequently illiterate Afrikaans speakers than did cultural journals and newspapers.

Personal contact was also more effective in bolstering social networks and community structures threatened by economic change than were public speeches about the non-existence of class differences. As the requests of farmers' wives for gifts of clothes and food to *bywoners* on their farms suggest, the ACVV helped to maintain, reconstruct and establish patterns of patronage. And with prompt visits and invitations to the local church, town-dwelling members sought to draw newly arrived Afrikaans speakers into community structures.

The ACVV's impact must also be assessed in the context of other forces that were shaping people's consciousness. If poor and landless blacks and whites alike were increasingly marginalised in the Cape countryside, the local state's response to rising levels of poverty were deeply racist. In the northern Cape, blacks appeared in court for breaking contract, sometimes deserting immediately after serving a first jail sentence - the risk of hard labour was preferable to working for white farmers who were themselves barely surviving.¹³⁸ By contrast, *bywoners* and struggling land-owners received food allowances from magistrates and work relief from divisional councils. In this context, people's knowledge that the ACVV helped them because they were white may well have further encouraged *'race'*-identification. Women's social work activities, centred on the private sphere of the family, and state policies of resource distribution in the public arena combined to reinforce racial identities; Afrikaans beneficiaries must also have been more receptive to a nationalist discourse which meshed racial and linguistic categories.

Clearly, the ACVV's contribution to Afrikaner nationalist penetration of the *platteland* was uneven. Its social work and promotion of popular culture was certainly important in the construction of the *'Afrikaner'*. But if poorer members from the economically backward Cape interior were not fully integrated into the imagined community of the *volk* by the late

137 *Die Huisgenoot*, Oct. 1917, p.171.

138 CA, 1/SBK (Springbok Magistrate records), 1/13/17 (Criminal Record Book), 1925-1926. Willem Jurie, charged for desertion on 4 Nov. 1926, was sentenced for *'neglect to resume service'* on 6 Dec. 1925. Hendrik Kivido was similarly charged (23 Oct. 1925 and 11 Nov. 1926). During this period, the number of farm labourers sentenced for *'desertion of service'* rivalled the many cases in which persons of *'mixed descent'* were found guilty of petty stock theft.

1920s, the organisation's success in reaching people who had not been drawn into its structures must have been even more limited.

It was in the industrialising centres, where the ACVV was dealing with growing numbers of dislocated people streaming in from the *platteland*, that the struggle to remind Afrikaans-speaking whites of their 'true' identity was waged with greater urgency and consistency. Here, female Afrikaner nationalists were heavily involved in both publicity campaigns and practical welfare work. In this city with its growing numbers of white Afrikaans speakers, new policies were more readily applied - and articulated in the Nationalist press.

5. Fashioning 'Afrikaners' in the City: the ACVV's Social Work in Cape Town of the 1920s

Some early practices of Cape Town's ACVV continued throughout the 1920s. Leadership were still committed to the promotion of Afrikaans. Like their *platteland* colleagues, they still acted as the moral guardians of 'Afrikaner' society. In the city, this included a vigorous campaign for censorship of films accessible to children - an appropriate task for *volksmoeders* who were especially responsible for the nation's young.¹³⁹

But a shift in emphasis towards doing social work in the city itself was apparent by the late 1910s. While the Cape Town branch of the ACVV had been the earliest, its work during the first fifteen years of its existence had amounted to raising funds for projects elsewhere in the Cape and to giving financial assistance to organisations like the *Vrouwen Zending Bond* already engaged in social work in Cape Town.

In 1919, leading Cape Town member E.G. Malan (and future leader of the NVP) explained the importance of personal contact with the poor:

(Niets is beter berekend om) het probleem, van de armblanke vraagstuk, op te lossen, dan persoonlijke aanraking met die ongelukkigen in haar eigen woningen. Op die wijze is er gelegenheid om beter met de behoeften van zoo een huisgezin bekend te worden, en door belangstelling en goeie raad, ze wederom tot moed en vertrouwen op te wekken...¹⁴⁰

139 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/4 (Cape Town), 25 March 1926. Some rural branches were also concerned about the influence of 'bioskoop' shows for children. For example, see the Cradock branch minutes for 3 Dec. 1921.

140 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/4 (Cape Town), 25 Sept. 1919.

[Nothing is better calculated to solve the poor white question, than personal contact with the unfortunate in their own homes. The visitor gets to know the needs of such families and, through sympathy and good advice, to awaken in them feelings of hope and trust...]

ACVV members now engaged in activities already practised by some rural branches for more than ten years. They visited poor families on a regular basis and followed these visits up with help for those considered to be in need: money for rent, medical care, clothing, employment. Unlike *platteland* branches, where volunteers would do the rounds throughout the 1920s, the scope of Cape Town's work soon demanded the attention of full-time staff. While members still served on a *huisbesoek* (house visiting) committee, a social worker was employed and an office established in Salt River from 1924.

The branch's new emphasis on social work reflected the rapid growth of a poor Afrikaans population as rural people flocked to the city. The new emphasis on urban poverty also reflected an important conceptual shift in Afrikaner nationalist thinking about poverty - a problem no longer regarded as specifically rural.

Like its counterparts on the *platteland*, the Cape Town branch directed its efforts at people whose home language and skin colour made them Afrikaners in the eyes of middle-class nationalists. In a *Vrouesake* column of 1922, Rothmann vividly described the abject poverty of working-class Salt River. But her sympathy was for white Afrikaans speakers moving to Cape Town from the *platteland*, not their black neighbours:

Daar is baie arm mense in Soutrivier. As mens so deur die strate loop rondom die stasie, en die rye op rye huise sien, grys van die roet, die verandatralies soos stukkende en slegte tande in hulle gesigte; hier en daar 'n sieklike, rookverstikte boompie, 'n gewemel van kinders, wit en swart deurmekaar, in die strate; die agterplasies vol rommel en treurige ou wasgoedjies - ag, woon my mense dan hier? dink jy. Is dit hiervoor dat hulle die plase verlaat, te ongeskik en ongeleerd om boerewerk te doen, honderd maal meer ongewapen vir die lewensstryd in die stad. Daar is baie arm mense in Soutrivier: en die oorgrote meerderheid is Afrikaners...¹⁴¹

[There are many poor people in Salt River. When you walk along the streets near the station, and see the rows upon rows of houses, grey from soot, the veranda railings like bad and broken teeth in their faces; here and there a sickly, smoke-choked tree; swarms of children, black and white together, in the streets; the backyards full of junk and wretched washing - oh, is this then where my people live? you think. Is it for this that they leave the farms, unsuitable and untrained for farmwork, a hundred times less prepared for the struggle to survive in the city. There are many poor people in Salt River; and the overwhelming majority are Afrikaners...]

The Cape Town branch consistently applied its policy of working only amongst those who they judged to be members of the *volk*. In 1925 its social worker argued that the ACVV's financial support for the *Vrye Apteek* (Free Dispensary) in Salt River was 'baie

141 *Die Burger*, 'n Rommelverkoop deur die Vrouesending-bond', 19 July 1922.

onbevredigend ... daar die apteek deur 'n baie groter persentage Slamse gebruik word as ons eie mense' ['very unsatisfactory because the pharmacy is used by a much larger percentage of Muslims than our own people'].¹⁴² Support for the *Vrye Apteek* was accordingly slashed in half.¹⁴³

The ACVV only participated in fundraising events after finding out whether 'blanke Afrikaanssprekendes' ['white Afrikaans speakers'] would benefit.¹⁴⁴ The organisation also tried to get the Board of Aid to improve its services for Afrikaans speakers. In 1926, for example, they applied for an ACVV member to serve on the Board of Aid to represent Afrikaans speakers 'daar klagtes dikwels ingedien word deur ons mense dat hulle nie op 'n bevredigende manier behandel word nie' ['because we often receive complaints from our people that they do not receive satisfactory treatment'].¹⁴⁵

But if the women belonging to the ACVV practised charity along ethnic lines, their constituency did not always exhibit an ethnic consciousness. In fact, members' work in the *agterbuurtes* (slums) suggested that the pressures of urbanisation threatened to erode the very characteristics that distinguished their *volksgenote* from the rest of Cape Town's poor - those of linguistic preference, racial identity and religious affiliation.

The Cape Town ACVV's ethnocentrism was reflected in concern that 'their people' were being lured away from the traditionally Afrikaner Dutch-Reformed church. While the ubiquitous 'Roomse Gevaar' ['Roman Catholic threat'] was largely a figment of *platteland* imaginations, conditions in the cities made for more tangible threats. Cape Town members worried that other churches involved in social work, like the Catholic church, would lure people away.¹⁴⁶ But they were also concerned that Afrikaans speakers were themselves forsaking the Dutch Reformed church. Like the Johannesburg *dominees* who complained that people were going to the *lawaaigedoentes* of new sects springing up in working-class areas,¹⁴⁷ the ACVV was concerned that Apostolic and Anabaptist sects were gaining ground

142 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/4 (Cape Town), 16 Nov. 25.

143 *Ibid.*, 16 Nov. 1925; 18 Dec. 1925.

144 *Ibid.*, 29 March 28.

145 *Ibid.*, 29 Aug. 26.

146 *Ibid.*, 25 Sept. 24; 26 March 1925.

amongst Afrikaans speakers in Salt River and Woodstock. In March 1924 the social worker reported that she encountered many people who had joined the Apostolics on her house-visits.¹⁴⁸ Enough Afrikaans-speaking whites in Woodstock and Salt River were drawn to revivalist sects for the branch to be alarmed. However, the Dutch Reformed Church and some leading promoters of Afrikaner culture seemed less concerned. The ACVV sent a letter to Woodstock's *kerkraad* (church council), protesting against their allowing *Wederdopers* (Anabaptists) to use the church hall. Its appeals to *Nasionale Pers* to refuse placement of advertisements for *Russeliete* (Jehovah's Witnesses) and Christian Scientists' meetings were unsuccessful.¹⁴⁹

As economic change displaced people from *platteland* communities to the cities, church charity was crucial to the reconstruction of old patterns of patronage and structures of authority that would mesh with the requirements of Afrikaner nationalism. Most Cape Town members belonged to the Dutch-Reformed Church, and the branch worked closely with churches. When helping people, the first step was typically to approach the *kerkraad* of their particular church (whether in Cape Town or in the *platteland*) or of the area in which they lived.

But while the preservation of religiously-defined community was uppermost in the minds of many *platteland* women, urban-based members generally focused on other dangers. Not surprisingly, Afrikaner nationalists were concerned that with the growth of an Afrikaans-speaking proletariat in the cities, racial boundaries were blurring. According to nationalists, 'Afrikaners' were forgetting that they belonged to an exclusively white and culturally distinct *volk*. Rothmann articulated this fear in *Vrouesake* when she described an encounter with a young, working-class couple, 'Afrikaners', who sat chatting to each other at Cape Town station. Her guess was that the man worked at a factory and the woman in domestic service:

... die kind se taal, en haar hele denkwyse, was die van 'n baie minderwaardige klas kleurling; Dit was om van te gril - so grof, so lelik - so tiepies kleurling; en so ook word haar hele houding. Ons het 'n woord 'meidagtig' - ek hou nie daarvan nie, want ek weet van aias wat hulle fyn gedra; maar dit was wat daardie kind was.

147 I. Hofmeyr, 'Building a Language from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity, 1902-1924' S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987), p.100.

148 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/4 (Cape Town), 25 Sept. 1924.

149 *Ibid.*, 25 March and 6 May 1926; CA, DRC, V21, 2/4/1, Secr. Nasionale Pers to F. Steyn, 24 April 1926.

Dit was duidelik dat sy op een of ander manier, miskien deur huislike omgewing, miskien deur haar posisie van diensbaarheid, die kleurlingstandaard aangeneem het.¹⁵⁰

[The child's language, her whole way of thought, was that of a coloured of very inferior class. It made one shudder - so rough, so ugly, so typically coloured; and so also her whole bearing. We have a word - meidagtig - I don't like it, because I know ayahs that carry themselves graciously, but that is what this child was like.

It was clear that in some way or other, perhaps because of her home surroundings, perhaps because of her position of servitude, she had adopted the coloured standard.]

Here Rothmann voiced concerns that were repeatedly spelt out in *Vrouesake* and by others on the ACVV page in *Die Huisgenoot*. Her argument also echoed those of others when, after articulating her fears that people were assimilating the supposedly inferior culture of people from other 'racial' groups, she went on to deny the significance and permanence of class differences:

Moet ons dan maar aanneem, soos so baie mense konstateer, goeie, brawe mense, met 'n groot hart vir hulle volk, dat sommige Afrikaners klaar vas is in 'n klas wat hulle heeltemal apart stel? Ek kan dit maar nie glo nie. Hoe kan dit wees dat in 'n paar geslagte mense van dieselfde bloed en famielie so radikaal van mekaar geskei kan word? Nee, die skeiding is net tydelik; dis nie ingebore nie. Teenoor die gevalle wat wegsak kan jy stel die wat opklim...¹⁵¹

[Do we then have to accept, as many good, brave people who have much empathy with their *volk* do, that already some Afrikaners belong permanently to a class that places them entirely apart? I simply cannot accept this. How can it be that within a few generations people of the same blood, from the same families, are parted so radically from each other? No, the division is only temporary; it is not inborn. Against the cases that are lost you should place those that climb...]

That a member of the ACVV should put forward this argument is hardly surprising - after all, the organisation was seeking to overcome the rifts being caused by economic change in Afrikaans communities. This meant convincing factory workers and domestic servants that as white Afrikaans speakers they belonged to the *volk*, regardless of their class position. They had to be helped to identify with and conform to the Afrikaner culture being constructed by middle-class nationalists.

Vrouesake highlighted the abject living conditions of many working-class whites. On one such visit described by Rothmann, the ACVV's social worker led her to three families, 'almal Afrikaners en lede van ons Kerk' ['all Afrikaners and members of our Church'] in a Woodstock tenement. The visitors noted not only the cramped living conditions but that 'gekleurde' ['coloured'] tenants lived in the building.¹⁵² By the middle of the decade, the proximity of black and white workers led Cape Town women to conclude that drastic

150 *Die Burger*, 'Oor Klere en Handhaaf', 9 June 1924.

151 *Ibid.*, 9 June 1924.

152 *Ibid.*, 'Mense in hokke', 4 Sept. 1926.

strategies were needed. Cultural identification needed the material base of racially segregated living areas. Rothmann's description of children playing in the streets of Salt River, 'wit en swart deurmekaar' ['black and white together'] reflected broader fears concerning the settlement of people from the *platteland* in the poorer, racially mixed residential areas of the cities. The poverty documented by the ACVV was cause for concern, but more worrying by far was the fact that 'Afrikaners' lived together with 'coloureds'. The ACVV's official submission to the Economic and Wages commission in 1925 highlighted this fact:

Deur die ontoereikende loon wat hulle ontvang, gedwonge om die goedkoopste kamers of huise te huur, moet die arm mense in baie gevalle saam met gekleurde woon. Hulle woon huis aan huis met die gekleurde, of in kamers wat op dieselfde balkon uitloop. Hulle gesels soms oor en weer soos bure; hulle kom mekaar help (veral die gekleurde die blanke) in geval van siekte; hulle kinders speel saam in die straat...¹⁵³

[Because of the inadequate wages they receive, forced to rent the cheapest rooms or houses, poor people often have to live with coloureds. They live next door to the coloureds, or in rooms that lead to the same balconies. They sometimes chat like neighbours; they help each other when there is illness (it is especially the coloureds that help the whites); their children play together in the streets...]

The Cape Town branch responded by trying to remove people from living quarters in close proximity to 'coloureds'. In 1926 the social worker asked members to help prevent 'die saam woon van gekleurde en wit in een yard' ['the living together of whites and coloureds in one yard'] and told them about 'n blanke vrou wat onder gekleurdes vervalde was. Sy is nou tot bekering gekom, en is begerig haar omstandighede te verbeter' ['a white woman who had fallen amongst coloureds. She has now repented and wishes to improve her circumstances'].¹⁵⁴ If the organisation could not convince families to move out of houses they shared with 'coloureds', it could at least rescue the children. In 1929 the member on *huisbesoek* duty reported that she had found a white family living together with 'coloureds'. This 'allertreurige' ['deplorable'] situation was remedied by extracting the children 'uit hul verderwende omgewing' ['from their corrupting surroundings']. A fifteen-year old girl was 'placed out' ('uitgeplaas') to a Nationalist member of parliament (presumably as a domestic worker). Two young boys were sent to institutions.¹⁵⁵

Some rural ACVV's were similarly solving the problem presented by the few stray white Afrikaans speakers found in black townships: they relocated families or removed

153 *Ibid.*, 'Die Ekonomiese en Loonkommissie', 7 Nov. 1925.

154 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/4 (Cape Town), 5 May 1926, 28 Oct. 26.

155 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/5 (Cape Town), 28 Aug. 1929.

children.¹⁵⁶ By the mid-1920s the Cape Town branch had concluded that the haphazard process of conscientising people through *huisbesoek* or of taking custody of their children did not sufficiently address the problem. The answer lay in the creation of segregated living areas. In evidence presented to Economic and Wages Commission in 1925, the ACVV stressed that white workers must receive the wages enabling them to move to 'better' residential areas. But it also emphasised that renting neighbouring houses or rooms in the same building to whites and 'coloureds' should be made illegal.¹⁵⁷ This trend towards a legislative solution would find even more favour in the 1930s.

By 1926, the duties of the branch's 'Waaksaamheidskomitee' ['Vigilance Committee'] included not only such issues as censorship and the business hours of liquor stores but investigation into 'the housing problem'.¹⁵⁸ The context was two-fold. On the one hand, provincial and central government had increased financial support to local authorities wishing to build houses for the poor. On the other, the Cape Town City Council had long been unresponsive to successive official reports about deteriorating living conditions.

Since 1912, legislation specified that municipalities could erect dwellings for the poor if enrolled voters approved. From 1914, the Medical Officer of Health could close houses 'unfit for human habitation'. According to the Public Health Act of 1919, local authorities were given the power to demolish 'insanitary' buildings'. These developments as well as the Housing Act of 1920 was certainly prompted by fear of epidemics.¹⁵⁹ The report that prompted the 1920 legislation also noted that poor whites were living in slum sections mostly inhabited by 'coloureds', and emphasised that poor whites should be 'compelled to reinstate standing of themselves on social scale...'¹⁶⁰ No segregatory measures were suggested; instead, a minimum wage for white labourers was recommended. The Housing Act made provision for the creation of a housing loan fund at a provincial level, and loans to local authorities for provincially approved building schemes. A Central Housing Board was

156 *Die Huisgenoot*, Aug. 1920, p.159, Jan. 1921, p.385; 8 Feb. 1927 (Upington).

157 *Die Burger*, 'Die Ekonomiese en Loonkomissie - ACVV werp 'n soeklig op die agterbuurte', 9 Nov. 1925.

158 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/4 (Cape Town), 28 Oct. 1926.

159 James P. Joyce, 'Cape Town and the Origins of the Slums Act of 1934' (Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1981), pp.10-14.

160 Christiane M. Elias, 'A Comparative Analysis of Government Housing Policy and Cape Town City Council Housing Policy' (M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1980), p.72; Joyce, 'Cape Town and the Origins of the Slums Act', p.17.

also established to evaluate proposed schemes. By the mid-1920s, discussions between local and central state officials involved in discussions of separate housing schemes for 'coloureds' and 'whites'. However very few houses were built by the City Council by the middle of the decade; most were for municipal workers and had relatively high rentals.¹⁶¹

The ACVV branch was centrally involved publicising poor living conditions in the inner city. In November 1926 'Kaapstad se skandelijke agterbuurtes' ['Cape Town's scandalous slums'] was front page news in *Die Burger*. Citing the ACVV's 'vigilance committee', the newspaper identified 'mixed race' residential areas, the influx of Africans into the city and exorbitant rentals as the most important problems.¹⁶² *Die Burger's* attention to such issues was prompted by a public meeting on housing organised by the ACVV. Its strategy involved drawing in a range of local charitable and church organisations, including many run by English speakers. The meeting was attended by representatives from the *Helpmekaar* and *Vroue Sending Bond*, as well as members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Young Men's Christian Organisation, the Anglican and Catholic churches, the Union of Jewish Women and the Chambers of Industry and Commerce. Shortly afterwards a Citizen's Housing League was founded. ACVV branch secretary Zerilda Steyn chaired the organisation; other prominent Cape Town members included social worker E.C. Steenkamp, ACVV president Minni Roome and M.E. Rothmann.¹⁶³

The League's efforts to draw attention to slum conditions included a Housing Week in 1929, during which a model cottage was erected on Cape Town's Grand Parade; a lorry carted around a shack (complete with inhabitants). In the same year, the Minister of Lands was asked to donate land near Maitland for a housing scheme. Steyn and her colleagues intended to do more than merely publicise slum conditions.¹⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the ACVV also publicised the plight of a particular section of the city's poor - that of young white women.

161 Joyce, 'Cape Town and the Origins of the Slums Act', pp.19-36.

162 *Die Burger*, 'Kaapstad se skandelijke agterbuurtes', 18 Nov. 1926. Prominent campaigners from the English churches like Bishop Lavis also emphasised the need to deal with an influx of Africans to the city. See *The Argus*, 18 Nov. 1926.

163 Joyce, 'Cape Town and the Origins of the Slums Act', pp.48-50; See also Chapter Six, pp.339-340 - a number of ACVV women resigned from the Housing League in 1928, apparently because it was not a women's only organisation.

164 *Forty Years of service: The Citizen's Housing League* (Cape Town, np, 1970).

6. Women's Work and Cape Town's ACVV in the 1920s

Throughout the 1920s, educating women in domestic matters remained central to the thinking of Cape Town's ACVV. If their own aspirations as career-women and women who tackled *volksake* outside the home sometimes prompted them to qualify their support for the view that the highest calling of women was motherhood, it still informed their projects around the education of working-class women.¹⁶⁵ Throughout the 1920s, the *huishoudskole* were thought to fulfil an all-important task in teaching impoverished girls the skills of motherhood.

But in Rothmann's blunt reminder to readers of *Die Burger*, 'ons maak hulle groot vir bediendes' ['we are rearing them to be servants'].¹⁶⁶ Domestic work was still thought to be an option for women forced to earn money through economic circumstance. The frequent classified advertisements in *Die Burger* asking specifically for 'fatsoenlike Afrikaanse diensmeisies' ['respectable Afrikaans servant girls'] suggest that work was available.¹⁶⁷

However, from the late 1910s and especially from the mid-1920s there was more discussion around problems relating to the class-position of domestic workers. This was one motivation for the NVP inspired 'Ons Dogters' ['Our Daughters'] conference on women's work in 1925, where the status of white domestic workers was a prominent theme. ACVV members

165 A DRC publication reported not only that the NVP had asked the church to organise a conference on women's education but that this organisation believed 'the highest calling of a girl' to be 'that of housewife and mother'. Rothmann was careful to correct this 'misinterpretation of the women's views': the NVP women agreed that because most women married and had children, women's education should focus on this aspect of their lives. However, 'the highest calling of women is the same as that of men - to reach their full potential - this could be through the tasks of wife and mother, or it could be through other work. That we are women is but a circumstance of life; in the first place we are people...' (*Die Burger*, 'Ons Dogters', 18 Aug. 1925, my translation).

166 USDC, MER, 55.ko.8C ('Vrouesake' cutting collection), 'n Vroue-beskouing van die Plan', c.1924.

167 According to census figures, there were 1560 white female domestic workers in the Cape Town/Wynberg municipal area in 1921. This figure had increased only marginally by 1926 to 1 638. In this year 622 'Dutch-South Africans' were in domestic service. No figures are given for black women until 1936, when there were 12 700 'coloured' women as against 1235 whites in domestic service.

Afrikaans newspapers frequently carried classified advertisements similar to the following: 'Gevra deur dame wat op kantoor is, fatsoenlike Afrikaner-meisie om huis te hou vir haar dogtertjie wat skool gaan. Goeie behandeling...' ['Wanted by lady doing office-work, respectable Afrikaner girl to keep house for her school-going little girl. Good treatment...'] (*Die Burger*, 23 Nov. 1925. See also 7 and 16 Jan. 1925.)

were concerned that the women were being treated as if they belonged to an inferior class, partly because they were doing work often done by black women and were now receiving the same discriminatory treatment:

... hulle word gedwing, nie deur hulle skuld of deur hulle onbekwaamheid nie, maar deur hulle *omstandighede*, na konkurensie met die kleurling; na die ongeoefende arbeid wat die kleurling doen; na dieselfde betaling en behandeling wat die kleurling kry. Na die stand en klas van die kleurling.¹⁶⁸

[... they are forced, not through their own fault or incompetence, but through *circumstance*, to compete with coloureds; into the unskilled labour done by coloureds; the pay and treatment received by coloureds. Into the station and class of the coloured.]

Domestic work in urban areas was thought to hold especial dangers with regards to the blurring of racial divisions amongst Afrikaans-speaking workers, and the ACVV was increasingly reluctant to place young women from the *huishoudskole* with families in Cape Town. While the organisation accepted that 'ons meisies van buite verplig is om huisdiens in die stede te soek' ['our girls from the countryside are forced to look for domestic work in the cities'], its ideal was to train 'blanke meisies vir beroepe wat hulle nie in gevaar bring van gelykstelling met minderbeskaafdes nie' ['white girls for work that does not endanger them by treating them on the same level as the less civilised'].¹⁶⁹

Most motivations for the *huishoudskole* referred to the need to train white Afrikaans women so that they could earn their keep. But there were class as well as charitable interests at the heart of the ACVV's concern. These middle-class women were themselves employers of domestic servants. Many wanted 'Afrikaner' *meisies* to mind their children - and obtained likely candidates from the ACVV's schools.¹⁷⁰ In 1920, Roos had explained the need for a third *huishoudskool* by pointing out that as part of their training, older students would help to look after the younger children at the school:

168 *Ibid.*, 'Die Meisiekinders', 11 Oct. 1927.

169 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/4 (Cape Town), 27 Oct. 1927 (Resolution tabled by M.E. Rothmann and E.G. Malan). See also Butler's discussion in 'Afrikaner Women and the Creation of Ethnicity' of Cradock ACVV women's appeals for the employment of white nannys, and their growing awareness of the 'ambiguous position which faced the white nanny in the farm kitchen'. From the mid-1920s, the Cradock ACVV also expressed anxiety about 'the fate of young women in the cities' and the limited work opportunities available to them (pp.69-70).

170 The minutes of branch meetings indicate that at least three members of the Cape Town branch employed girls who had been trained at the schools. The number was probably higher: the ACVV columns in *Die Huisgenoot* contained requests from head-office to members for reports on the former *huishoudskool* students now working for them, as well as discussions between ACVV members concerning the treatment of white/Afrikaans servants.

Op die wijze worden zij dan bij al het andere ook opgeleid om goede helpsters voor moeders te worden. Wij menen dat vooral hierdoor in een grote behoefte voorziening kunnen gemaak worden.¹⁷¹

[In this way they will also be trained to become good helpers for mothers. We believe that especially in this regard a great need will be met.]

Perhaps Roos's remark was a ploy to convince Afrikaans speakers that employing white servants would be to their own benefit - still, she articulated the particular interests of Afrikaner nationalist petty-bourgeois women. Rothmann also sometimes expressed her views on the employment of white domestic workers in ambiguous terms. Apparently, the interests of middle-class employers - and not only the needs of domestic workers themselves - fuelled her concern for shorter working hours:

[Die fabrieksmeisie] is baas oor haar tyd wanneer die fabriek met haar klaar is ... Kan ons wat huismoeders is die fabriek nie nadoen nie? Want hy is nou 'n sterk konkurrent vir ons, en rokkel ons bediendes van ons weg, met die aanloklike vryheid.¹⁷²

[The factory girl is free to plan her own time when the factory is finished with her ... Can we house-mothers not imitate the factory? Because it now presents strong competition, and lures our servants away from us with its enticing freedom.]

In the latter half of the 1920s, members of the Cape Town branch were increasingly concerned that the women themselves were often not keen to enter service and that they were opting for other kinds of employment, especially in factories. As officials from the Juvenile Affairs Board put it, 'die werk waarvoor daar aanvraag is doen die meisies nie graag nie, en die plekke waar hulle graag wil werk, is vol' ['the work with a shortage of applicants is not popular with the girls, and the places where they want to work are full'].¹⁷³

Much discussion now centred around the possible reasons for domestic work being unpopular and ways to rectify the situation. Reference was made to long hours, low pay, unregulated work.¹⁷⁴ ACVV members argued that hours of work should be standardised and that domestic workers should have more free time so that factory-work would no longer be more attractive to women.¹⁷⁵

171 *Die Huisgenoot*, Jan. 1920, pp.285-6.

172 *Die Burger*, 'Wat is Huiswerk werd?', 10 Feb. 1925.

173 *Ibid.*, 'Werklose meisies', 29 Feb. 1927.

174 See, for example, 'Wat is huiswerk werd', *ibid.*, 10 Feb. 1925.

175 *Ibid.*, 'Werklose Meisies', 29 Feb. 1927.

Rothmann also argued that domestic tasks were undervalued because these were generally women's work. She publicised her view - 'vrouewerk in eer hou! dit moet ons leuse wees!'

['Honour women's work! This must be our motto!'] extensively:

As ons die geskiedenis van die mensdom nagaan sien ons dat die oorsprong van hierdie minagting van huiswerk net bloot die feit is dat huiswerk gedaan word deur die vrou, op wie gesien word as 'n minderwaardige wese. Om hulle meerderwaardigheid te bewys moes die mans konstateer dat alles wat mans doen meer werd is as wat vrouens doen...

Maar nou dat ons al hoe meer 'n werk op sy meriete leer beskou, en nie volgens sy klassifikasie nie nou behoort ons darem anders te begin dink oor vrouewerk, waaronder huiswerk en kind-oppas altyd eerste op die lys staan, en sal staan.¹⁷⁶

[If we consider the history of humankind we see that this contempt for housework stems simply from the fact that housework is done by woman, who is looked down upon as an inferior being. To prove their superiority the men had to assert that everything men do is worth more than what women do...

But now that we are learning more and more to judge work on merit, and not according to classification, we should really begin to think differently about women's work, amongst which housework and childcare has always ranked, and will always rank first.]

Rothmann related the low status of domestic workers directly to this fact - while housework was under-valued as 'women's work', this could not easily be challenged.¹⁷⁷ Meanwhile, issuing trained domestic workers with a 'Nasionale Huisvrou Sertifikaat' ['National Housewife Certificate'] could improve the situation.¹⁷⁸ This document - according to middle-class women familiar with the value of diplomas - would upgrade the status of domestic workers and make the standardisation of wages possible. As Rothmann explained, *bediendes* (servants) could then become respected *huishoudsters* (housekeepers).¹⁷⁹ The *huishoudskole* were accordingly upgraded to include a two-year course at the end of which students received the certificate.

176 *Ibid.*; 'Die Meisiekinders', 11 Oct. 1927.

177 *Ibid.* Also 'Wat is huiswerk werd?', 27 Jan. 1925; 3 Feb. 1925; 10 Feb. 1925. (See also footnote 55 for Rothmann's views on Afrikaner men's attitudes towards domestic 'women's work'.)

178 *Ibid.*, 10 March 1925. This idea was also taken up by the (Union) education department with regards to industrial schools - an 'Unie Huisvrou Sertifikaat' ['Union Housewife Certificate'] was instituted.

179 USDC, MER, 55.ko.8C ('Vrouesake' cutting collection), 'n Vroue-beskouing van die Plan', c.1924.

But if ACVV leaders were angry about the downgrading of women's work, they were not necessarily challenging, or even disagreeing with, prevalent ideas about what constituted suitable work for working-class women. The few employment-related projects that the Cape Town branch started in the 1920s were well within the confines of *vrouewerk* (women's work), suitably infused with the ACVV's class and racial concerns, and similar to projects started by rural branches years ago. The ACVV applied to the municipality for the establishment of a laundry specifically for white women.¹⁸⁰ They also helped to run a needle-work class for unemployed girls and women. This was meant to provide skills and to keep the women out of bioscopes and 'ander gevare' ['other dangers'].¹⁸¹

However, a different strand of thought concerning women's work was also evident from the early 1920s. Even while ACVV leaders sought to improve upon projects for the education of women as housewives and domestic workers, they recognised that many women were stepping out of 'traditional' work roles. Since the mid-1910s, the number women workers in Cape Town's industries had increased steadily. The ACVV soon realised that many female factory workers were white and Afrikaans.¹⁸²

As early as 1917 Elizabeth Roos had expressed the need for the establishment of a hostel for girls working in factories.¹⁸³ From the early 1920s, leading members of the organisation pointed to the fact that economic change impacted on the nature of women's work. As Rothmann wrote in *Vrouesake* of 1922,

Wat ook die rede mag wees, meer as die helfte van die wereld se werk gly al sekerder en sekerder in die vrouens se hande. Hulle moet die mensdom groot maak, en moet hulle ook omgord om uit te gaan en kos te soek. Wat sal dit afgee? Seker die grootste verandering van toestande al ooit bekend, en dit kom so ongemerk op ons dat ons nie daarnaar oplet nie...¹⁸⁴

180 The municipality had already established one that did not apparently practise segregation. The ACVV (working with the *Helpmekeer*, and the DRC's poor relief committee, *Armesorg*) failed to get the municipality to establish a second one exclusively for the use of 'arme blanken', but the authorities did agree to arrange for white women to work on specific days once numbers justified this (CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/4 (Cape Town), 27 April 1922; 1 July 1922).

181 *Ibid.*, 19 March 23.

182 See Chapter Three, footnotes 113, 115 and 118 for information and statistics on female industrial workers.

183 H.C. Lambrechts, 'Die Eerste Vyftig Jaar - die Ontwikkeling van die Werk van die Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1957), p.86.

184 *Die Burger*, 'Briewe van 'n verplante Boervrou', 10 May 1922.

[Whatever the reason may be, more than half of the world's work is sliding into women's hands. They must raise humanity, and must also gird themselves to go out and look for food. Where will this lead? Probably to the greatest change in conditions ever known, and this happens so imperceptibly that we do not notice...]

Rothmann's discussion touched both on middle-class women like herself who were moving into various professions, and also on the streams of office and factory workers that she watched on their way to work every morning. Van der Lingen, her colleague in the ACVV and NVP, commented specifically on the fact that working-class women were having to fend for themselves. She stressed the futility of debating whether this was acceptable; problems arising from these changes should rather be confronted:

Om te sê dat die vrou se plek in die huis is - laat my koud - as daar soveel vroue en dogters self moet buite die huis werk om 'n dak oor hulle hoof te kan hou. Ons moet die feit onder die oë sien, dat ekonomiese toestande sedert die laaste twintig jaar ook in ons land baie verander het, dit help nie om te sê dat die vroue so sleg is nie - hulle wil nie trou nie - hulle wil nie huiswerk doen nie - hulle wil nie families hê nie.... As ons sien dat dinge verkeerd is, moet ons probeer om reg te maak, en nie sleg te maak nie.¹⁸⁵

[To say that woman's place is in the home - leaves me cold - when so many women and girls are forced to work outside of the home in order to keep a roof over their heads. We must accept that in the last twenty years economic conditions have changed much in our country, nothing will be achieved by saying that women are bad - they don't want to marry - they don't want to do housework - they don't want families.... If we see that things are going wrong, we must try to address the issues instead of criticising.]

Van der Lingen made it clear that this *vrouesaak* was ultimately a *volksaak*. She emphasised the common interests of all Afrikaner women: her article was called 'wat is ons werk werd?' ['what is the value of our work?'] But she was specifically addressing 'ons vroue en moeders' of the Afrikaner middle-class in order to convince them that unless they helped the white Afrikaans *fabrieksmeisies* (factory girls), the latter would be lost to the *volk* - and unable to contribute to its 'moral' and 'economic' well-being:

[of meisies in fabrieke en winkels] siel en liggaam aanmekaar kan hou - en ordentlik bly is 'n saak wat al meer en meer die aandag van ons vroue en moeders moet trek - ons moet die ding ondersoek, en sien wat ons daaraan kan doen om die meisies van ons volk daaraan te help dat hulle nie in die stryd om die lewe onder mag gaan nie - maar dat ons hulle mag behou om 'n baat te wees vir ons op sedelike, liggaamlike en ekonomiese gebied...¹⁸⁶

[whether girls working in shops and factories are able to keep body and soul together and to stay respectable is an issue that must increasingly draw the attention of us women and mothers - we must examine this issue, and see what we can do to help the girls of our people before they are lost in the struggle to survive. So that we may

185 *Ibid.*, 'Wat is ons werk werd?', 14 April 1925.

186 *Ibid.*, 14 April 1925.

keep them to become an asset for us in the areas of morality, physical well-being and economics]

By 1925, notes on religion in *predikantsvrou* and ACVV leader Minni Roome's diary were interrupted by scribbles on the employment conditions of Cape Town's white, female factory workers.¹⁸⁷ The ACVV certainly took it upon themselves to lobby the government about the situation of women in factories. In 1925 they set up a committee that was mandated - by the ACVV, not by workers - to approach the Economic and Wages Commission 'om as voorspraak op te tree vir meisies wat in of vir die fabriek werk ...' ['to speak for girls who work for or in the factories...']¹⁸⁸ A committee of women from the NVP - but including prominent Cape Town ACVV members - also approached the Dutch Reformed Church and suggested that a conference be held that looked at the employment prospects of young Afrikaans women; in the resultant 'Ons Dogters' conference the plight of not only domestic but also of factory workers featured.¹⁸⁹

Evidence to the Economic and Wages commission in 1925 also provided a glimpse of working women's lives in Cape Town, albeit through the eyes of middle-class ACVV members. The organisation visited a number of factories as well as shops and cafes in the course of their research.¹⁹⁰ A picture of workers putting in long hours for low wages, sometimes in unhealthy working conditions, often pressurised because of the prevalence of piece-work systems, emerged. Long working hours were said to affect the health of workers

187 CA, A1953, Add 3/1 (Note book of M. Roome)

188 *Die Burger*, 'Hoeveel het 'n meisie nodig om fatsoenlik te bestaan in die stad?', 11 May 1926. The ACVV approached the Minister of Labour in order to 'clear the way' for giving evidence before the commission. The women reported that 'it will be possible for us to act as speakers for the workers, on condition that we have the workers' agreement. He believes that it will not be necessary for us to join existing organisations; we could obtain the information in our own manner, to present to the Wage Board...' (translated). In 'A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers in Cape Town, 1900-1939' (Ph.D thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984), Martin Nicol explains that Cape Town's unions of the 1920s were mostly 'sweetheart' unions who did not pressurise factory owners. Between 1927 and 1935, textile and clothing workers - a large percentage of whom were women - only had recourse to a union that 'did not even have a paper membership' (p.275).

189 *Die Burger*, 'Kongres: Ons dogters', 15 Sept. 1925; CA, DRC, V21, 24/1, 'Verslag van die Komitee vir Ondersoek van Werktoestande en Lone vir Meisies').

190 The ACVV based its evidence about hours of work, health benefits and holiday pay on conditions at twelve factories: eight produced clothes, four confectionary and two produced baked goods. However, the organisation also reported on conditions in factories producing matches, tea, soap, medicines, cigarettes and blankets.

adversely. In most factories (75%) workers put in more than eight hours a day. Hours in cafes and shops were even longer, with day shifts of up to ten hours.¹⁹¹

Factories were also criticised for failing to provide health benefits for workers. Most (75%) gave no pay or wages when workers were ill; others offered a minimum of benefits. The ACVV's criticism of this neglect of workers' interests was infused with its racial concerns:

Die werksters kan nie help as hulle siek word nie. Die gewone loon, wat hulle ontvang vir hulle arbeid, is so karig, dat hulle niks kan opsy sit vir 'n tyd van siekte nie. En waarvan moet hulle dan lewe? In die onwenslike stelsel skuil ook 'n groot gevaar. Dit is juis in so 'n tyd van siekte, dat onervare jongmense hulp van ongewenste persone kan ontvang.¹⁹²

[It is not the workers' fault when they become ill. The wages they usually receive for their labour are so meagre that they can set nothing aside for times of illness. And how must they then survive? This undesirable system also holds great danger. It is precisely in such a time of illness, that inexperienced young people receive help from undesirable persons.]

Factories were also criticised because most did not pay workers during holidays. Eight out of twelve factories gave no wages on public holidays, half closed for ten days annually without paying their workers during this period; four gave workers no leave and did not close at all. The women's criticism echoed the anti-capitalist sentiments expressed by other Afrikaner nationalists during this period:

Selfs die masjiene, waarmee hulle werk en so jaag om hulle brood te verdien en die sakke van die fabriekhouers te vul, het olie nodig om die ratte hulle werk te laat doen, en die werkgewers sorg dat die dooie masjiene goed geolie word - maar die masjiene van vlees en bloed - wat van hulle? ¹⁹³

[Even the machines they work with when they rush so in order to earn their bread and to fill the pockets of the factory-owners, need oil so the cogs can do their work, and the employers see to it that the dead machines are oiled properly - but the machines of flesh and blood - what about them?]

Factories were likewise criticised for exploiting women through piece work and putting-out systems. Piece-work put workers under pressure and adversely affected their health. Women who were employed by factories but worked at home were paid 'bespotlike pryse' ['ridiculous prices']. The ACVV commented sharply on these exploitative practices:

Die meeste profiteerdery vind plaas in verband met die werk deur meisies en vrouens, in fabriek sowel as tuis, vir fabriek en winkels gedaan. Die onbeskermde vrou, wat verplig is om vir enige loon te werk, is so 'n maklike prooi vir die

191 *Die Burger*, 'Die Ekonomiese en Loonkommissie - ACVV werp 'n soeklig op die Agterbuurte', 9 Nov. 1925.

192 *Ibid.*

193 *Ibid.*

fabriekhouer of winkelier wat alleen op wins uit is. Hierdie roekelose eksploitasie kom voor op een of ander manier in verskeie fabriekke waar vrouens en meisies werk; veral in seker hemde- en klerefabriekke is dit die geval.¹⁹⁴

[Most 'sweating' takes place when women and girls work in factories as well as at home for factories and shops. The unprotected woman, who is forced to accept whatever wage she is offered, is such easy prey for factory and shop owners only interested in making profits. This reckless exploitation occurs in various factories that employ women and girls, especially in certain shirt and clothes factories.]

Rothmann's reaction to similar evidence presented at the 'Ons Dogters' church conference suggested that ACVV members were concerned specifically with the *profiteerdery* of English-speaking capitalists. She characteristically infused a gender dimension into their protest:

Uit die vrouens se nood trek die ryk man sy voordeel Die man, so word steeds met nadruk beweer, beskerm die vrou. Dat daar waarheid in hierdie gesegte sit is hierdie kongres, begin en belee deur ons kerk, 'n bewys. Maar as 'n mens dan weer na fabriekke en winkels en kantore gaan, dan sak jou hart!¹⁹⁵

[The rich man takes advantage of women's plight.... Man, so we are always told emphatically, protects woman. This conference, organised by our church, proves that the saying rings true. But when you return to the shops and factories and offices, then your heart sinks!]

But if ACVV leaders opposed capitalist exploitation and female oppression, they were also antagonistic to the erosion of racial barriers. They emphasised that in most factories no attempt was made to segregate the work and relaxation space allotted 'wit meisies' ['white girls'] and 'die gekleurdes' ['the coloureds'].¹⁹⁶ The result (so the ACVV argued) was 'gemeensamenheid tussen blank en gekleurde' ['familiarity between white and coloured'], with the former sinking to 'die kleurling standaard' ['the coloured standard'].

White women were also sexually harassed by black workers and white bosses alike.¹⁹⁷ The ACVV was apparently not concerned with sexual harassment in general, but outraged that white women were being degraded along with their black co-workers:

'n Jong meisie van sewentien jaar het in 'n fabriek saam met gekleurdes gewerk. Die baas vat soms op 'n spelerige manier aan die meisie, as hy so deurloop, en dan kom hy by die wit meisies en wil dieselfde aan hulle doen. Eendag het hy net aan 'n meisie gevat en kom toe weer aan hierdie meisie se gesig vat. Sy het reguit vir hom gesê dat sy dit nie lyk nie.¹⁹⁸

194 *Ibid.*

195 *Ibid.*, 'Ons Dogters', 25 Sept. 1925.

196 *Ibid.*, 'Die Ekonomiese en Loonkommissie', 9 Nov. 1925.

197 *Ibid.*

[A young girl of seventeen worked in a factory together with coloureds. The boss would sometimes touch the black women playfully when he walked past them, and then he would want to do the same to the white girls. One day he had just touched a black woman and came to insult this girl. She told him straight that she didn't like it.]

Moreover, 'coloured', female overseers also 'humiliated' white staff. The organisation provided an example of how a young white woman's unwillingness to socialise with fellow workers elicited 'harassment' from her superior. In ACVV women's minds, her horror at being told to greet her black co-workers constituted a commendable reticence:

'n bruin voorvrou vra aan 'n wit meisie,
"Waarom groet jy ons nooit, of lag met ons, as ons in die straat by jou verby loop nie?"

Die wit meisie is bang, want dit is mos 'n voorvrou, en sê toe maar sy het hulle nie gesien nie. Toe sê die bruine:

"Wag, as ek jou more by die stasie sien, sal ek jou aan die arm gryp, dat jy my moet sien".

Die wit meisie het maar gesorg dat sy die volgende more 'n halfuur vroeër werk-toe gegaan het, om die vernederende posisie te ontwyk...¹⁹⁹

[A female coloured overseer asked a white girl,

'Why do you never greet us, or laugh with us, when we pass you in the street?'

The girl was afraid, because after all this was an overseer, and so she said that she had not noticed them. Then the coloured said,

'Wait, if I see you at the station tomorrow, I shall grab your arm so that you will have to notice me.'

The next day the white girl saw to it that she left half an hour earlier for work so as to avoid this humiliating situation.]

But white workers were not always prepared to pay the price of maintaining racial barriers, as Rothmann's conversation with an overseer revealed:

"Ons buitemense kan nie aan so iets gewoond word nie" sê ek aan een van die opsigteresse by 'n fabriek.

['Our country people cannot get used to such a thing', I said to one of the overseers at a factory'.]

"And yet," antwoord sy [she answered], "I can't keep the Dutch girls from the coloured girls. It's not the coloured girls who make the advances: it's the white girls who seek their company".²⁰⁰

The situation cried out for intervention by Afrikaner nationalists. So while much energy was still spent on issues pertaining to white, Afrikaans domestic workers in the 1920s, projects concerning women in factories were also started. Rothmann's articles in *vrouesake* discussed possible ways to address the problem of integration in factories and articulated some of the notions motivating the ACVV's projects.

198 *Ibid.*

199 *Ibid.*

200 *Die Burger*, 'Meisies in Fabriek', 25 March 1924.

She noted that factory-owners did not concern themselves much with 'die meng van blanke en gekleurde' ['the mixing of white and coloured'], but were primarily interested with the 'geldwaarde van die meisie as werkster' ['the money value of the girl as worker']. In order to make profits they had to have a steady supply of workers. Some factory owners were quite willing to segregate their workers, but in most cases it was impossible to sustain this because a steady supply of white women workers was not available.

If the ACVV could not influence factory owners to segregate their workers, it could at least attempt to regulate the social lives of women workers. Rothmann explained the importance starting 'clubs' for white *fabrieksmeisies*. Supervised by ACVV women, they could be provided with 'gesonde afwisseling' ['healthy relief'] from their labour, and taught useful craft while their benefactors learned 'iets van hulle lewe' ['something about their lives'].²⁰¹ Eventually (once enough clubs were established) the ACVV would guarantee factory owners a steady supply of white labour - and their objections to segregation would fall away.²⁰²

But ACVV members realised that they could only have limited impact on the cultural identification of the women workers while the latter settled in racially mixed living areas. From the mid-1920s the organisation investigated the possibility of establishing a hostel for white female factory workers. They successfully approached the government and Dutch-Reformed Church for help. Their plan would finally bear fruit in 1931 when they established the a hostel for 'werkende meisies' ['working girls'] in Salt River.

Conclusion

The 1920s had seen the emergence of greater political confidence amongst Afrikaner women in the Cape. Central to this was a far greater presence than previously of female voices in Afrikaner print culture. Women journalists like Rothmann and Malherbe promoted the activities of the ACVV as well as the women's wings of the National Party. They contributed extensively to the construction of a *volksmoeder* discourse that cast women's domestic duties as essential services to the *volk*. Rothmann and Malherbe also insisted that

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*

the state was a household that needed a woman's hand to put it right. This amounted to a redefinition of the 'political' and a blurring between 'public' and 'private' spheres.

In this respect, Paula Baker's study of the 'domestication of politics' by American women in an earlier period offers valuable insights into Rothmann's project, and interesting parallels for a study of women and Afrikaner nationalism. Baker discusses the existence of distinct male and female political cultures in the United States of the nineteenth century. 'Male politics consisted of formal structures: the franchise, parties, and holding office'. The female culture was based on the ideology of domesticity and involved continual expansion of the environs of the 'home'. Women 'carried out social policy through voluntary action' and 'practised a kind of interest-group politics, by directing their attention to specific issues and exercising influence through informal channels'. Baker therefore suggests a broader definition of 'politics' that incorporates 'both formal and informal means of influence', that includes women's voluntary work as part of the political system.²⁰³

Afrikaner women certainly belonged to a similarly distinct female political culture of in which women expanded the range of issues claimed as *vrouesake*. Rothmann's contributions to *Die Burger* were part of a broader journalistic trend to which publications like *Die Boervrou* also belonged. More unusually, she demonstrated a sharp eye for the contradictory modification of 'male' and 'female' political cultures as women moved into the public sphere. Debates about woman's role in building the *volk* were given a new slant by Rothmann's measured, wry evaluations of relations between male and female Afrikaner nationalists.

But Rothmann's *Vrouesake* columns also exhibited a brand of gender analysis circumscribed by the prerogatives of ethnic nationalism. Like other women of her political persuasion, she accepted the view that the intricacies of the *naturelle vraagstuk* (native question) should delay full citizenship for Afrikaner women - specifically, that black women should not be enfranchised.

If some new ideas were in the air, this was not accompanied by a radically different practice on grass-roots level in the ACVV. On the Cape *platteland*, ACVVs continued to visit the poor, and helped them pay school fees or feed and clothe their families. If the criteria used sometimes followed older church related notions of community, white and Afrikaans people were mostly singled out for help. In wealthy branches, townswomen and farmers' wives evaluated requests; elsewhere poor women sought to help themselves through joining the

²⁰³ Baker, 'The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920', pp.631-7.

ACVV. Ideas promoted in the national health campaign of the mid-1920s filtered through to some local branches of the rural Cape. *Volksgesondheid* was vigorously promoted as a woman's issue by Afrikaner nationalists and incorporated into the ACVV leadership's plans. But at first branches responded sporadically to their suggestions for promoting children's health.

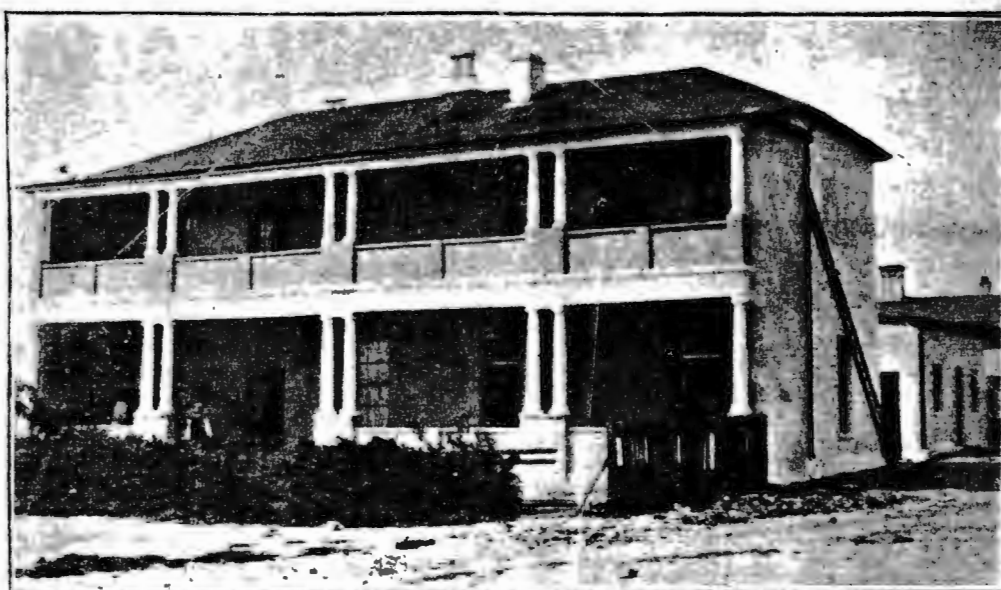
Many rural practices could be related not only to the fact that branches were often isolated, but also to the fact that backward *platteland* economies did not facilitate the spread of nationalist ideas. By the late 1920s, the ACVV's nationalist message had failed to reach significant numbers of its own members in the northern Cape, who still held to regionally limited and church based notions of community. Even so, the ACVV's charity contributed vitally to a network of female mutual support that could strengthen ethnic identity and facilitate the transmission of nationalist ideas.

For the middle-class women in the Cape's industrialising centres, the ACVV was part of a nation-wide *susterskap*. Their work certainly demonstrated the fusing of political concerns with 'womanly' work of charity. By 1925, ACVV leadership was demonstrating their ability to ethnicise poverty through labours in the private sphere (house-visits and social work amongst the poor) with more public activities - writing in Afrikaans newspapers, contributing to government investigations. Increasingly, ACVV leaders also favoured a legislative solution to their efforts to promote a race-specific cultural identity amongst working-class Afrikaans speakers.

Issues claimed as *Vrouesake* by Cape Town's ACVV included the need to devise suitable employment for Afrikaans women. This had certainly long been a concern of the ACVV, but the problem acquired new and subtler dimensions in the city women's (publicised) discussions. In their middle-class eyes, domestic service was in some ways desirable employment for working-class women. But problems included the general down-grading of *huiswerk* as women's work, class discrimination and white domestics' proximity to black workers. Moreover, the subjects of their concern often chose to work elsewhere. As Rothmann and her colleagues faced up to the reality of female factory workers, they also began to discuss and document the exploitation of women workers. A major concern for Afrikaner nationalists was that white Afrikaans speakers were working together with black women. As the decade drew to a close, Cape Town's ACVV made plans calculated to prevent Afrikaans girls from settling into 'mixed race' suburbs and associating with black co-workers.

Chapter Five

**Programmes for 'Aankantmaak' ('Tidying up'):
The ACVV's Work from 1928-1939**



A.C.V.V.-TEHUIS, SOUTRIVIERWEG 41.

Goedkoop en aangename losiesplek vir
werkende meisies onder 21 jaar.

LOSIES VIR MEISIES WAT ONDER

£1 PER WEEK VERDIEN

WORD VERSKAF TEEN

10/- PER WEEK.

VIR DIE WAT

£1 TOT £1:10:0 PER WEEK VERDIEN, 12/6 PER WEEK.

Goeie ete, mooi slaap-, bad- en ontvang-
kamers. Ook was- en strykgeriewe.

Plate 23. 'Inexpensive and pleasant accommodation for working girls under 21'. A poster advertising the ACVV's hostel for white, Afrikaans, female factory workers in Salt River road.



Plate 24. M.E. Rothmann on one of her many journeys in the rural Cape as Organising Secretary for the ACVV, c.1930.



Plate 25. Mrs Luise Malan, president of the Upington ACVV (left), in c. 1932. Her sister Erica Lutz (my grandmother, far right) and a friend, Erica Cloete, were studying for the newly established Diploma in Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch.

Chapter Five

Introduction

From the end of the 1920s and into the 1930s, ACVV leaders drew up new, sometimes ambitious, plans for dealing with the 'Afrikaner' poor. In Cape Town, they developed further plans to deal with racially 'mixed' and slum housing. *Hoofbestuur* also identified 'sexually irresponsible' young women and 'mixed' marriages as urgent problems. Rothmann initiated a drive to improve maternity care for women on the *platteland*. Cultural nationalism reached new, co-ordinated heights as the ACVV participated in an increasingly centralised Afrikaner nationalist programme. What follows examines these shifts in ACVV policy.

1. Philanthropy, Education and Promoting 'Afrikaner' Culture in the 1930s

The day-to-day practice of most ACVV branches still involved the provision of help and advice to the Afrikaans poor. In fact, the welfare activities of many branches probably became more crucial than previously in the drought- and depression-stricken years of the 1930s. As a member from Cradock in the eastern Cape recalled of the early 1930s, 'die ACVV was nommer een' ['the ACVV was number one'] with regards to philanthropy for Afrikaans speakers. The church referred destitute families to the organisation; new arrivals in town also knew about the ACVV and went 'heel eerste' ['first of all'] to the branch office to ask for accommodation.¹ Magriet Abel, who joined the Upington branch in 1934, also explained how the ACVV would help newly-arrived families by providing food and finding them work:

Die oomblik wat die mense kom aanmeld, dat hulle so behoeftig is dat ons moet kosgee, daai oomblik beginne soek ons werk. En nie altyd goeie werk gekry nie maar somtyds nogal.²

Note: The Cape Town ACVV's minute books for 1920 to 1930 are filed under (CA, DRC, V21) 2/1/1/5, 2/1/1/6, 2/1/1/7 and 2/1/1/9. See pp.80 and 199 for an explanation of how references to ACVV branch minutes have been abbreviated.

¹ Interview with Mrs Erasmus, Cradock, 25 July 1991.

² Interview with Mrs M. Abel, Upington, 17 June 1990.

[The moment the people applied, because they were so poor that we had to feed them, that moment we began to look for work. And we didn't always find good work but sometimes we did.]

Personal contact remained important in shoring up social networks and community structures made vulnerable by increased poverty. Abel recalled how ACVV members' practical help and advice drew women into female support networks and church-centred community structures. The 'visitors' committee' would first identify families who needed material help, and then

wat die besoekkomitee nou ook baiekeer teegekom het was wanneer daar nou in die huise probleme is, anders nou juis as behoeftig. So waar daar nou huweliksontrou was of waar daar te veel drank was of moeilikheid, het ons besoek daar so veel as moontlik en ons het later as dit nie anders kan nie het ons maar rapporteer aan die kerk - hulle het dit dan nog nie agtergekom nie. Sodat ons baiekeer was die ACVV nou die informant vir die kerk sodat hulle nou hulle werk ook verder kan doen...³

[what the committee often encountered was that there were problems in the homes, other than those stemming from need. So when there was infidelity or too much drinking or trouble, we visited as often as possible and later when we could not do otherwise we let the church know about it - they would not have discovered it yet. So that very often the ACVV informed the church about such things, so that they could take their work further...]

ACVVs in the northern Cape also drew members of the respectable poor into their branches. Herself from a 'respectably poor' farming family ('blanke armes', not 'arm blankes') and married to a railway employee, Abel recalled an acquaintance who lived in

'n sinkhuisie, maar binnekant nogal heeltemal goed; na die kinders nou beginne werk het hulle so mooi vir haar ma gesorg dat sy het later 'n *heeltemalle* gerespekteerde mens geword in die gemeenskap en self by die ACVV aangesluit. Dit was baie mooi gewees.⁴

[a tin shack, but inside rather nice; when the children began to work they looked after their mother so well that she later became an *entirely* respected person in the community and even joined the ACVV. It was very lovely.]

As the number of unemployed whites in the Cape's coastal cities swelled with drought and depression, the daily business of helping to feed, clothe and provide schooling for the poor increased steadily. Branch members recorded their conviction that 'ons mense' ['our people'] should somehow be stopped from coming to the city 'in sulke groot getalle' ['in such large numbers'].⁵ Meanwhile, the branch's social worker and her auxiliary

3 Interview with Abel. A letter from Anna Geyer to a Wellington member of the ACVV suggests that Cape Town members who tried to win 'die vertroue van die armes' ['the trust of the poor'] sometimes helped them to become 'nuttige burgers' ['useful citizens'], but encountered much suspicion from urban Afrikaans speakers (Cape Archives (hereafter CA), A1953 (ACVV private collection) A1/1/1, A. Geyer to M. Luckhoff, 12 May 1934).

4 Interview with Abel.

besoekkomitees continued to provide families with food and medicines, and helped white Afrikaans speakers to find work.

But in 1928, Rothmann had already commented somewhat sardonically on the old-fashioned ways of a rural branch:

hulle gaan nog op die ou antie-manier aan, met 'n besoek-komitee, 'n pondkas wat maandelikse bydrae kry, 'n hospitaal-komitee, 'n arm-komitee ens ... so sal hulle glo maar aangaan...⁶

[They're still working in the old aunty manner, with a visitors' committee, a cash box for monthly contributions, a hospital committee, a poor committee etc ... and so they will probably continue...]

This was one the many observations that Rothmann made about the functioning of *platteland* ACVVs in her new capacity as the ACVV's first full-time 'organising secretary'. Her appointment was indicative of a new resolve to co-ordinate rural projects, and her visits to rural branches were geared towards introducing new schemes and working methods. From 1928, communication from *hoofbestuur* was also expanded with the launch of *Eendrag* (Unity), the organisation's own publication. Rothmann would henceforth regularly report on branch activities, while editorials and articles further explained ACVV projects to members.

If the ACVV had long been an important base for the promotion of cultural nationalism, it became even more important when *Nasionale Vroue Party* (NVP) programmes were halted by legislation that circumscribed party-political activity. As the ACVV executive explained, the organisation now had to assume additional responsibility for work previously channelled through the NVP.⁷ Local ACVVs were ever active in sponsoring the education of poor children. From 1932, the executive launched new programmes that encouraged high school education or additional training at industrial schools.⁸ But their most concerted drive with regards to education was an invigorated *leeslus* (love of reading) campaign. The ACVV took over work done initially through the NVP, which was now forbidden to do the 'social' work that (according to Rothmann) inspired its founding. Indeed, this became one of the ACVV's most wide-spread and systematically promoted projects, particularly in the rural Cape. Branches were encouraged to establish or improve school libraries - farm schools

5 CA, Archives of the Dutch Reformed Church (hereafter DRC) V21 (ACVV collection), 2/1/1/5 (Cape Town), 28 Sept. 1929.

6 CA, A1953, A1/2/1 (Rothmann's diary as organising secretary), July 1928.

7 *Eendrag*, 'Vrouestemreg en die ACVV', July 1930, p.1.

8 H. C. Lambrechts, 'Die Eerste Vyftig Jaar: die Ontwikkeling van die Werk van die Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1957), pp.152-3; *Eendrag*, July 1931, p.71.

received special attention.⁹ ACVVs were meant to promote specifically nationalist print culture. An annual competition was sponsored by *Nasionale Pers*, the Afrikaner nationalist publishing house. Trophies were awarded to organisations in 'skoolraadareas' ['school board areas'] that bought the highest number of Afrikaans books for donation to school libraries.¹⁰ Through *Eendrag*, ACVV members were also told that good Afrikaners made use of libraries and spent money on Afrikaans books. Afrikaner mothers could only educate the *volk* if they read their own language.¹¹

The ACVV's efforts to support a popular Afrikaner culture also continued during the 1930s. In this respect, their work reflected the increasing centralisation of cultural nationalism. In earlier years, *hoofbestuur* had encouraged branches to initiate cultural activities - and many local ACVVs had promoted 'Afrikaner' history and *taal*. By the late 1920s, a change was apparent. The ACVV was one of many organisations to join the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuur Verenigings* (FAK), launched in 1929. The FAK was a cultural front used by the all-male, secret *Broederbond* to co-ordinate the activities of Afrikaans organisations.¹² FAK representatives who contacted the ACVV emphasised that the 'taal- en kultuurstryd' ['struggle for language and culture'] should be co-ordinated according to 'n vaste program'

9 Rothmann advocated 'leeskomitees' ['reading committees'] to rural branches, for example to De Aar's ACVV (CA, A1953, A1/2/1, Sept. 1928). Detailed surveys of existing libraries and reading habits were made. Branches were soon actively promoting the reading of Afrikaans books, mostly by collecting money for school libraries or donating books to schools. For example, CA, A1953, Add 1/14/3/1/2/1 (Van Wyksdorp Steering Committee minutes), 20 Nov. 1929, 31 May 1930; Add 1/5/7/1/1 (Kenhardt branch minutes), 14 July 1930, 14 Nov. 1931.; Add 1/5/6/1/1/1 (Kakamas), 12 July 1935; *Eendrag*, April 1930, p.21; Oct. 1930, p.23. The ACVV also persuaded the Department of Education to boost funds for school libraries (*Eendrag*, Oct. 1930, p.24). The Cape Town ACVV's social worker also distributed copies of *Die Huisgenoot* and *Die Kerkbode* amongst her clients.

10 *Eendrag*, 'Skoolboekerye', July 1930.

11 *Ibid.*, April 1935, p.54; *ibid.*, 'Aanmoediging van Leeslus', 3rd Quarter, 1938, pp.40-41. Some branches collected money for libraries by organising performances of Afrikaans plays and dressing up in 'ouderwetse' ['old-fashioned'] clothes (*ibid.*, Oct. 1931, p.99).

12 *Die Burger*, 'Vergadering van die ACVV', 1 Aug. 1930; CA, DRC, V21, 2/4/1, Secr. Skakelkomitee van Afrikaanse Verenigings' to Mrs A. Dreyer, 14 Feb. 1934; G.H.P. de Bruin to Mrs de Wet, 3 Sept 1936; D. O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 to 1948* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1983), p.61. By 1937 (according to O'Meara), almost 300 cultural bodies were affiliated to the FAK. It organised locally and nationally; for example, the Cape Town ACVV belonged to the city's FAK together with organisations like the *Helpmekaar*, SA Teacher's Union and the *Voortrekkers* (an Afrikaner nationalist youth movement). The latter organisation was founded as an alternative to the Boy Scouts on *Broederbond* initiative, with the strong support of the Afrikaans women's organisations. See, for example, *Eendrag*, June 1930, pp.42-43.

[`a definite programme'].¹³ It was through this organisation that plans for the hugely successful 1938 centenary were directed. The trek itself was organised by the *Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereniging* (Afrikaans Language and Culture Organisation) of the Railways and Harbour union. Upon request of the FAK, ACVV branches sold *Voortrekker* stamps to raise funds for the envisaged *Voortrekkermonument*.¹⁴ ACVVs from towns on the *Tweede Trek* (Second Trek) route were often represented on the local committees in charge of preparations for the festivities.¹⁵ *Hoofbestuur* also encouraged rural branches to participate. Inspired by Roome's personal address about the `*vlyt, netheid, godsvrug en sedelikheid*' [`industry, neatness, godliness and virtue'] of the *Voortrekker* woman, Kakamas members joined choir practice for the Dingaans' Day festival.¹⁶

The ACVV's bread-and-butter philanthropy also began to reflect its leaders' new ideas that social work should be `educative' and `scientific'.¹⁷ As a Stellenbosch member proudly explained, the ACVV was developing a data base on local indigents together with other voluntary organisations. A sociology student was in charge of the statistics.¹⁸ Cape Town's ACVV also took head office's increased disapproval of free hand-outs to heart. Their schemes to combat poverty included a class in which poor women were provided with old clothes and taught to mend and adjust them - they could then buy the finished products.¹⁹ In 1936, Rothmann reported with satisfaction that some rural branches no longer distributed free food and clothes, but exchanged these for token amounts in cash or kind.²⁰ By the end of the decade, a few branches had also appointed social workers.²¹ But the ACVV's

13 CA, DRC, V21, 2/4/1, Secr. `Skakelkomitee van Afrikaanse Verenigings' to Mrs Dreyer, 14 Feb. 1934.

14 CA, DRC, V21, 1/5 (ACVV executive minutes), 5 Aug. 1936; CA, DRC, V21, 2/4/1, G.H.P. de Bruin to Mrs de Wet, 20 Oct. 1936. This campaign was successful in Cape Town; whether rural branches participated to the same extent is not clear.

15 CA, A1953, 3/3/4/1 (Cradock annual reports and correspondence) M. Van Rensburg to I. Theron, 14 July 1938; 3/3/6/1 (Malmesbury annual reports), report for 1938-1939.

16 CA, A1953, Add 1/5/6/1/1/1 (Kakamas) 30 Nov. 1938.

17 This trend is discussed more extensively in Chapter Six.

18 CA, DRC, V21, 1/5, 7 March 1934.

19 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/6 (Cape Town), 28 Sept. 1933.

20 *Eendrag*, `Op reis vir die ACVV', Oct. 1931, pp.83-91.

growing conviction was that cultivating independence was not enough if Afrikaans poor whites were wont to 'lose' their 'race'-consciousness.

2. From 'Deurmekaarwoon' ('Mixed-up Living') to 'Gesonde Behuising' ('Healthy Housing')

Rural ACVVs had earlier extracted poor whites from 'mixed race' slums. Now some branches also began to organise for the establishment of housing for the *minderbevoorregtes* (underprivileged). The Cradock branch's plans to accommodate poor whites in municipal housing bore fruit by 1933. (Subsequent efforts were directed at having the scheme named 'Uitkoms' ['Relief' or 'Deliverance'] to suppress apparently frequent references to the 'Armblanke Lokasie'.)²²

Cape Town's social worker and her *besoekkomitee* regularly detailed the unsavoury living circumstances of poor families who often shared one room in dirty buildings.²³ But their overriding concern remained 'racial mixing'. The greatest evil that threatened family life, explained an ACVV member, was the lack of proper housing. 'Veral waar gekleurdes en blankes in dieselfde gebou woon word dit gevoel dat ons alles in ons vermoë moet doen om die mense daar uit te kry' ['Especially where coloureds and whites live in the same building we feel that we must do everything possible to get the people out of there'].²⁴

An immediate start could be made with the provision of lodging and supervision to that most vulnerable section of poor Afrikaans speakers - young women who came to town on their own. The ACVV's hostel for working women opened its doors in 1930 (*see plate 23*). The context of severe economic depression and widely publicised fears of a poor white trek to the cities made its work all the more important in Afrikaner nationalist eyes.²⁵ ACVV

21 SKDB, S13/16/1, 'Vergadering gehou in die Kantoer van die Sekretaris van Volkswelsyn', 10 July 1939; H.C. Lambrechts and E. Theron, *Vrouevolksdiens* (Cape Town: HAUM, nd c.1956), p.41.

22 Cradock Branch minutes, letter dated 8 Feb. 1938, Secr. ACVV to City Council. The ACVV started this campaign in 1933. Also CA, A1953, A1/1/1 (branch to *hoofbestuur* correspondence), Aberdeen ACVV secr. to M.E. Rothmann, 27 July 1935.

23 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/8 (Cape Town), 25 Aug. 38. Also CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/6, 28 July 34.

24 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/7 (Cape Town) Oct. 1936.

members reported that more young people than ever were moving to the city, and worried about how best to contact newly arrived *dogters*.²⁶ The hostel would remain a focal point of the ACVV's work in Cape Town for at least twenty years. (By the late 1930s, rural towns like Upington and Paarl were also organising to establish hostels.)²⁷

The continued importance of the hostels and other projects targeting workers was also related to the fact that the ACVV was not the only organisation to target Afrikaans women workers in the 1930s. In the north, the non-racial Transvaal Garment Workers' Union (SAGWU) had promoted 'a strong degree of class consciousness' amongst Afrikaans women, 'helped to mould a sense of both national and international working-class unity among its members' and explicitly opposed fascism and Nazism.²⁸ Organisers made forays into Cape Town through the South African Garment Workers' Union (SAGWU) from the early 1930s. The most tangible result was membership drives by more conservative unions based in the city. Organiser Bettie du Toit, who established a Cape Town branch of the SAGWU in 1938 and attempted to organise in Paarl, also reported opposition from the DRC and 'fascist' Afrikaner nationalist unions.²⁹

25 *Die Burger*, 'Armlankes word gehelp. Regering en kerk gaan saamwerk', 5 July 1930; 'Hef Arm Blankes op uit Nood', 9 July 1930; 'Kap die wortels uit', 9 July 1930; 'n Ernstige waarskuwing', 14 July 1930. More articles were published from 1932. For Gustav Preller's important contribution in *Die Volkstem* of 1933, a series of articles called 'Die Vyand in ons Poorte', see Transvaal Archives Depot, A787, 177, 74, 'Armlankes'.

26 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/5 (Cape Town), 25 March 1931; 13 Feb. 1930; 26 July 1930.

27 Upington branch minutes, 2 Nov. 1935, 2 May 1936, July 1936; interview with S. Malan, 18 July, 1990. Upington's ACVV successfully established a hostel. However, see PTA, VWN, SW69/17, 474, 'Ondersoek insake voorgestelde hostel vir laagbesoldigde werkende meisies te Worcester', 26 Jan. 1938. While the ACVV wanted to establish a hostel for 'working girls', factory workers in Worcester who were interviewed (by a social worker) were against living in a hostel. They were mistrustful of a place that had rules and of the ACVV's eagerness to have them move into a hostel. Moreover, 'hulle sal net as armlankes bestempel word, want die ACVV is tog bekend as 'n vereniging wat daardie klas in die samelewing bearbei...' ['they would be branded poor whites, because after all the ACVV is known to work amongst this class...']

28 Iris Berger, 'Solidarity Fragmented: Garment Workers of the Transvaal, 1930-1960' in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987). See also Elsabè Brink, 'The Afrikaner Women of the Garment Workers' Union, 1918-1939' (M.A. dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1986) and 'Maar net 'n klomp "Factory" Meide': Afrikaner Family and Community on the Witwatersrand during the 1920s' in Belinda Bozzoli (ed.), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987). Unfortunately, Martin Nicol's account of the SAGWU's attempts to organise Cape Town garment workers in the 1930s in 'A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers in Cape Town, 1900-1939', (Ph.D. thesis, UCT, 1984) rarely mentions whether the workers who joined were women or men.

The Salt River hostel provided cheap board and lodging for up to twenty white, Afrikaans women from the *platteland*. By 1935, rural branches were supplying some of the lodgers.³⁰ Preference was given to women aged sixteen to twenty-one who earned meagre wages and were therefore likely to end up in the poorer and 'racially mixed' suburbs close to Cape Town's factories.³¹ The project was partly state-funded, with under-aged girls receiving government subsidies. The majority of women were from villages and farms near Cape Town. Most were from *bywoner* families; a quarter had fathers who did skilled or unskilled wage-work.³² Women typically had seven or more siblings. Most worked in tobacco and clothing factories, a small percentage were shop-assistants, and very few worked in cafés and as hairdressers and dressmakers.³³

Superintendent Daisy Theron took an active interest in the working lives of the women. In the uncertain economic climate of the early 1930s when factory work was low-paid and full-time work difficult to find, the hostel certainly provided some financial stability for factory workers. Theron was expected to keep track of work opportunities and labour legislation. When workers were retrenched, she accompanied them to factories and helped them to find new jobs.³⁴ By 1933, factory owners were said to realise the benefits of the dual supervision over workers and to prefer women from the hostel.³⁵

But the hostel was by no means only a place where factory workers could obtain cheap food, lodging and steady employment. The supervisor also had to provide 'doeltreffende

29 B. du Toit, *Ukubamba Amadolo* (London: Onyx Press, 1978) pp.46-48. For an account of nationalist opposition to non-racial trade unionism in the Transvaal, see Berger, 'Solidarity Fragmented: Garment Workers of the Transvaal'.

30 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/6 (Cape Town), 25 July 1935. Rural branches were also being asked for help in dealing with young women who came to Cape Town to look for work. See Cape Town's request for help from the Montagu branch, CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/6 (Cape Town), 31 Sept. 1933.

98 CA, A1953, 2/35, 133 (Monthly reports, ACVV hostel, Salt River, 1931-33).

32 Unskilled workers included railway workers, municipal workers, transport riders, fishermen, cattle-herds, divisional council workers. Skilled workers were overseers in factories, carpenters and builders (*ibid.*, 1931-1939)

33 *Ibid.* Records from the 1940s are by far more detailed and extensive than those of the 1930s.

34 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/5 (Cape Town), 24 Sept. 1931.

35 CA, A1953, 2/35, 133, Sept. 1933.

toesig en leiding' ['effective supervision and guidance'] and attempt 'maatskaplike opheffing' ['social upliftment'].³⁶ Women who wanted an evening out had to write down where they were going and when they would be back. Visitors - properly introduced to the supervisor - were received in a communal sitting room.

Efforts were certainly made to encourage the reading of Afrikaans. The hostel received newspapers as well as *Die Huisgenoot*, *Die Brandwag* and *Die Kerkbode*.³⁷ Attempts at 'kulturele opheffing' ['cultural upliftment'] included compulsory church attendance and membership of a social club. Afrikaans religious societies also met on the premises. Women were encouraged to invite their friends to cultural events - in 1931 the ACVV already claimed that the hostel was 'n bymekaarkomplek vir die jong mense ... mej. Theron het wonderlik daarin geslaag om die vertroue van die meisies en hulle vriende te wen' ['a gathering place for young people ... Miss Theron has succeeded marvelously in winning the trust of the girls and their friends...']³⁸

Those who began unsuitable friendships in spite of the regulations were quickly taken in hand. When the superintendent learnt that an 'eenvoudige boeredogter' ['simple farmer's daughter'] from Caledon was receiving presents from a 'ryk Asiaat' ['rich Asian'] and planned to marry him,

[was dit] alleen die ernstige afkeuring van die ander meisies in die Tehuis en die besliste optree van die Hoof ... wat die meisie eindelijk beweeg het om van haar dwase voorneming af te sien. Sy is toe teruggestuur na die ouerlike plaas.³⁹

[it was only the strong disapproval of the other girls in the Hostel and the firm action of the Head ... that finally persuaded the girl to abandon her foolish intention. She was then sent home to the parental farm.]

Theron's combination of homeliness and discipline drew more than enough applicants - the building on Salt River road was soon filled to capacity and many had to be turned away. By 1938 the ACVV was already planning a larger hostel. The ACVV also endeavoured to reach female factory workers by founding social clubs from the early 1930s. In the year of the Great Trek Centenary, programmes acquired an explicitly Afrikaner nationalist cultural content: ACVV women taught the workers *volksdanse*, the 'traditional' Afrikaans dances popularised by the FAK.⁴⁰

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*, Reports for 1938-1939.

38 *Ibid.*, Reports for 1931-1932.

39 CA, A1953, 2/39, 141, I. Theron to chairman of Mixed Marriages Commission, 8 Aug. 1938.

In 1933 the ACVV also started a crèche for the children of Afrikaans, white working mothers. This reflected not only a recognition of the particular needs of working women, but also the ACVV's continued preoccupation with racial identity. Children who were otherwise 'forced' to play with 'gekleurdes' ['coloureds'] could spend time in the racially pure environment of the crèche. This involved making absolutely certain that the children were 'white': 'dit word ook gevoel dat albei ouers gesien moet word, om moeilikheid van twyfelagtige ras, te voorkom' ['it is also felt that both parents must be seen, in order to avoid problems with children of dubious race'].⁴¹ In spite of such measures, executive member Anna Geyer reported her dejection upon noticing 'hoe merkbaar die invloed van die saamwony met gekleurdes is by die kinders in die bewaarskool. Ons sal moet ons baie beywer vir 'n verandering' ['how noticeable the influence of living with coloureds is on the children at the crèche. We will have to work towards change'].⁴² Meanwhile, the crèche presented ACVV women with another opportunity to draw poor white Afrikaans speakers into the 'imagined community' of the *volk*. In 1938, even Christmas celebrations had a special Afrikaner nationalist touch:

Vader Krismis sal hierdie jaar vervang word deur 'n voortrekkerwa en twee voortrekker dames wat die presente aan die kinders sal gee.⁴³

[Father Christmas will this year be replaced by a voortrekker wagon and two voortrekker ladies who will give presents to the children.]

But the ACVV's efforts to encourage race-consciousness amongst the city's white working class went beyond projects aimed specifically at women. Cape Town's social worker still laboured to extract families from 'racially mixed' neighbourhoods and houses. In 1934 she reported that alternative employment and lodgings had been found for a family who had

40 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/8 (Cape Town), 24 Nov. 1938. Compare also the programme of cultural activities for the Salt River Hostel before and after 1938 (CA, A1953, 2/35, 133). In 1932, no lectures on Afrikaner culture were given. In 1938 items on the cultural agenda included lectures on folk songs and dances and several on aspects of the Great Trek, including one on the *Tweede Trek* (Second Trek) by a participant.

41 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/6 (Cape Town), 25 July 1936. On occasion the need to weigh up moral obligations towards (white) mothers whilst maintaining racial purity stymied branch members. In April 1934, they discussed the situation of a white *meisie* living with a coloured man: 'Wat moet swaarder weeg - die feit dat sy *moeder* is van die twee onegte kinders van gemengde ras, of dat sy *blank* is? Die kinders kan nie as *blankes* opgeneem word nie, al lyk hulle nog so blank' ['what should weigh more heavily - the fact that she is *mother* of two illegitimate children of mixed race, or that she is *white*? The children cannot be accepted as *whites*, even though they look so white'].

42 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/8 (Cape Town), 29 Aug. 1938.

43 *Ibid.*, 27 Oct. 1938.

lived with, and worked for, a coloured family. ('Sy vrou, wat 'n intelligente voorkome het woon die Moedersmiddae by. Taklede gaan nog maandeliks op besoek.' ['His wife, who seems to be intelligent, attends the Mothers' afternoons. Branch members are still paying monthly visits']).⁴⁴ The social worker frequently reported on attempts to extract children and adults from 'coloured' families.⁴⁵ Their efforts were not always successful, as when a 'white' child's baptismal certificate pronounced her 'coloured', or when an old lady ('sy is hoogs gelukkig in haar omgewing' ['she is perfectly happy in her environment']) refused the offer of an old age home. The ACVV asked the DRC to withdraw her alimony.⁴⁶

Geyer's assertion that the ACVV should 'work towards change' to prevent 'white' children from acquiring *kleurling* (coloured) Afrikaans referred to her conviction that piecemeal opposition to racial integration was not effective. In 1933, Cape Town executive member Zerilda Steyn also linked 'gesonde behuising' ['healthy housing'] to segregation.⁴⁷ In fact, she led efforts to pressurise the City Council into providing housing for poor whites and (to a lesser extent) coloureds. As president of the Citizen's Housing League, she questioned the Council's contention that it did not have adequate legislative powers to deal with slum conditions and build new houses. In 1933 she claimed that as regards housing for the poor, the Council moved to the extent that it was pressurised by the Housing League. 'Ons het weer aangehou om die raad te stoot, en ons sal aanhou stoot totdat die raad beweeg' ['We've again been pushing the council, and we will continue to push until it moves'].⁴⁸ In response the Council adopted an 'eight year plan', its first ever definite housing policy with regards to slums. It also drew up draft legislation that increased the powers of local authorities to demolish slums. After discussions with central government representatives, the Elimination of Slums Act was promulgated in 1934.

Meanwhile, ACVV women were also centrally involved in the construction of sub-economic housing schemes for 'white' and 'coloured' workers in Cape Town. Citizen's Housing League members founded the non-profitmaking Utility Company in 1929. The organisations worked closely together - in fact, Steyn chaired the Housing League, was director of the

44 CA, DRC, V21, 1/5 (ACVV executive minutes), 20 July 1934.

45 For example, CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/5 (Cape Town), 28 Sept. 1930; 2/1/1/6 (Cape Town), 22 Feb. 1934.

46 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/6 (Cape Town), 26 March 1936.

47 *Die Burger*, 6 July 1933.

48 *Ibid.*, 28 April 1933.

Utility Company and remained on the ACVV executive.⁴⁹ The Utility Company proceeded to obtain private and state funding for its initiative. The first 'model township' in Brooklyn (or Ysterplaat, as it was also called), was completed in 1931.⁵⁰ By then, a housing scheme for 'coloureds' had also been established at Crawford. While the latter project still had only 28 houses by 1939, 594 units for 'whites' were already completed.⁵¹

The Utility Company and the ACVV were henceforth closely involved in the business of extracting families from 'mixed race' suburbs and settling them in the whites-only housing scheme. Mrs Driver, the *bywoner's* daughter who worked as a domestic before she married a driver for *Die Burger*, recalled how she applied for a sub-economic house in the Brooklyn/Ysterplaat area in the mid-thirties. The Utility Company's Zerilda Steyn had the final say:

Jy kom voor 'n raad, sal ek maar sê. Zerilda Steyn was nog my verslaggewer gewees jy weet wat van my, opgeneem het soos wat jy nou opneem wat hulle wou geweet het.... Jy gaan maar net na die kantoor hier en stuur eers 'n vorm in, en dan moes jy goedgekeur word volgens hulle vorm, en dan kom jy vir 'n onderhoud. Ja 'n onderhoud.... [Zerilda Steyn] was eintlik hoof van die affêre. As sy jou afgekeur het dan's dit finaal...⁵²

[You went before a board, so to speak. Zerilda Steyn was my case worker you know, who took down details, the things they wanted to know.... You went to the office and first sent in a form, then you had to be approved according to the form, then you went for an interview. Yes an interview.... [Zerilda Steyn] was really the head of the business. If she rejected you it was final...]

Her application was successful and living in the rent-subsidised Ysterplaat scheme made a crucial difference to the family's economic survival:

... ek het altyd vir my man gesê, was dit nie vir die Utility nie - ons het swaar gekry, want my man het min geld verdien. Dan het ek altyd vir hom gesê, jong hier het ons ryk geword. Ons het drie kinders, vier kinders gekry daarso. En dis rykdom om hulle groot te maak ... soos ek altyd gesê het they were a real godsend to our poor people you know, die minderbevoorregtes. Hulle was waarlikwaar.⁵³

[... I always told my husband, if it wasn't for the Utility - we struggled, because my husband didn't earn much. Then I said to him, you know here we've become rich. We've had three children, four children here. And raising them has been a blessing ... like I always said they were a real godsend to our poor people you know, the less privileged. They really were.]

49 *Forty Years of Service: The Citizen's Housing League* (Cape Town, [G&G design], 1970), p.2.

50 *Ibid.*, p.5.

51 *Behuisingsbond/Housing League: 60 Years of Service* (Pamphlet, np, nd c.1989.)

52 Interview with Mrs Driver, Milnerton (Cape Town), 8 Nov. 1991.

53 *Ibid.*

Social workers - some employed by the ACVV - regularly visited families.⁵⁴ At Steyn's suggestion, the organisation provided material help.⁵⁵ Moreover, the ACVV helped to screen people who wanted access to housing schemes. Upon visiting a prospective applicant's wife, the ACVV's social worker discovered that the family did not qualify - she was 'coloured'. Evidently, efforts to 'educate' people on the importance of race sometimes came too late:

Die man het na my kantoor gekom om 'n applikasie-vorm vir een van die utiliteitsmaatskappy huise in te vul. Op die vraag 'Kan jy waarborg dat jy en jou vrou albei blank is' het hy 'ja' geantwoord, maar het baie verwonderd gelyk oor so 'n vraag ek het hom toe breedvoerig verduidelik hoekom so 'n vraag gestel word. Toe ek later by sy huis besoek gaan aflê, met die doel om sy vrou uit te nooi na die ACVV moeders Klub, vind ek dat mev. Killian ['n egter] gekleurde vrou is. onnodig om te sê dat Killian nooit die applikasievorms gepos het nie en woon nog in die buurt wat hy as ongewens vir sy kinders beskou.⁵⁶

[The man came to my office to fill in an application form for one of the Utility Company houses. When asked 'Can you guarantee that you and your wife are both white' he answered 'yes', but looked very puzzled at being asked such a question. I then explained in detail why such a question is asked. When I later visited his house in order to invite his wife to the ACVV mothers' club, I found that Mrs Killian was actually a genuine coloured woman. Unnecessary to say that Killian never posted the application forms and still lives in the neighbourhood he regards as unsuitable for his children.]

In fact, the ACVV even refused people access who in its view were 'coloured' when they produced marriage certificates that described them as 'white'.⁵⁷ By 1938 the ACVV claimed that its efforts to 'educate' people with regards to the supposed dangers of living in a 'racially mixed' area were at last bearing fruit:

'n paar jaar gelede het dit ons voorgekom asof mense wat al lank [in Souttrivier en Woodstock] woon, dit eenvoudig as 'n doodgewone iets beskou om so tussen gekleurdtes te woon, maar deur gedurig te waarsku teen die gevare wat ons kinders bedreig deur die saamwoon het daar langamerhand ontwaking gekom en begin die blankes die wenslikheid van aparte woonbuurtes meer en meer te voel, sodat daar in die laaste jaar herhaalde versoeke deur ouers by die ACVV kantoor gekom het, dat die vereniging hulle moet beywer om aparte woonbuurtes te kry.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/7 (Cape Town), 24 Sept. 1936.

⁵⁶ CA, A1953, 2/39, 141, L. Kuhn to Secr. Mixed Marriages Commission, c. Aug. 1938.

⁵⁷ PTA, K48 (Evidence to the Mixed Marriages Commission, 1938) Vol.2, no.4-90.

⁵⁸ CA, A1953, 2/39, 141, 'Aparte woonbuurte vir blank en gekleurd', c. 1938.

[A few years ago it seemed to us that people who were long resident in Salt River and Woodstock thought it absolutely normal to live amongst coloureds. But through frequent warnings of the dangers that this living together holds for our children, an awakening has slowly come about and the whites are more and more convinced of the need for segregated residential areas. In the last few years parents have repeatedly asked the ACVV to work for segregated residential areas.]

Although the Housing League's efforts had led to the establishment of separate 'model townships' for 'coloureds' and 'whites', the late 1930s saw the ACVV convinced of the pressing need for more segregated housing. *Deurmekaarwoon* (mixed-up living) was apparently the biggest and ever worsening hindrance to the ACVV's work in Salt River.⁵⁹ Members visited landlords in order to convince them to let rooms and flats to whites only, but the organisation also urged more drastic action.⁶⁰ At the ACVV congress of 1938, Cape Town delegates argued that the organisation should start to lobby for the proclamation of separate group areas:

Omdat Soutrivier en Woodstock die grootste fabriekswyke is, en die arbeiders (sters) graag naby hulle werk woon om tyd en onkoste te bespaar, sal daar altyd 'n groot aantal blankes hier woon, daarom dring ons des te meer aan op aparte woonbuurtes.⁶¹

[Because Salt River and Woodstock are the largest factory areas, and the (men and women) factory workers prefer to live close to their work to save time and expense, therefore we insist all the more urgently on separate residential areas.]

Rural branches were also encouraged to draw up memoranda detailing the need for segregated residential areas. Cradock's ACVV appointed a deputation to discuss the need for segregated living areas with the town council.⁶² Upington's branch approached the municipality with evidence that allowing some two dozen poor white families to live in the 'Location' had (apparently self-evidently) pernicious results:

Die Munisipaliteit erken en betreur die feite deur die ACVV genoem, dat 'n blanke meisie geboorte gegee het aan 'n kind waarvan die vader 'n naturel is, en 'n ander aan 'n kind waarvan die vader [indien] is, ook 'n blanke meisie met 'n baster-kleurling getroud.⁶³

59 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/7 (Cape Town), 19 April 1937; 2/1/1/8 (Cape Town), 27 Jan. 1938. See also *The Cape Argus*, 'Europeans ousted', 27 March 1937, in which Zerilda Steyn is quoted on the subject of 'suburbs going coloured' and the escalating 'mixing' in inner-city areas.

60 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/7, 25 Nov. 37; 2/1/1/8, 27 Jan. 1938.

61 CA, A1953, 2/39, 141, 'Aparte Woonbuurtes vir blank en gekleurd', c.1938; CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/8 (Cape Town), 27 July 1937.

62 Cradock branch minutes, note of letter, ACVV secr. Van Rensburg to Town Clerk, 10 Aug. 1938. Also CA, A1953, Add 1/5/7/1/1 (Kenhardt), 4 July 1928.

63 PTA, VWN, 46/20, 245, P.J. Booysen to A.J. Pienaar, 30 Sept. 1938.

[The Municipality confirms and deplores the facts provided by the ACVV, that a white girl has given birth to a child whose father is a native, and another to a child whose father is Indian, also a white girl married a half-caste coloured.]

3. Opposing 'Skadelike Volksvoortplanting' ('Harmful Reproduction of the Volk')

Both rural and urban ACVVs therefore pursued concerns already apparent in earlier times - but with a greater emphasis on state intervention. The women's efforts to guard the morals of the *volk* through lobbying for legislation also involved the politics of reproduction - imbued with Afrikaner nationalist concerns for racial purity. In 1938 the ACVV gave evidence of the 'noodlottige gevolge' ['disastrous results'] of 'mixed' marriages to a government commission.

The testimonies presented to illustrate their tragic consequences are unintended chronicles of the hardship caused by the policies of the DRC, schools and charitable institutions in the 1930s. One case history described a DRC minister's visit (organised by the ACVV) to a white Afrikaans woman who lived with a 'kleurling' on a western Cape farm. The woman refused to leave him and pleaded with the *dominee* rather to marry them 'wat natuurlik nie gedoen is nie' ['which of course was not done']. Examples of extra-marital 'verbastering' ['miscegenation'] included the case of a 'white' woman who was expecting a 'coloured' baby. The presumably destitute woman proved a headache for race-specific homes for unmarried mothers; she was eventually placed in the Home for Friendless Girls 'ook 'n tehuis vir gekleurdes' ['also a home for coloureds'] that accepted whites 'in noodgevalle' ['for emergencies'].⁶⁴

The ACVV's stance aligned it to the *Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party* (Purified National Party) in the context of intense party-political conflict.⁶⁵ Jonathan Hyslop has shown that from

64 CA, A1953, 2/39, 141, L. Kuhn to Secr. Mixed Marriages Commission, c. Aug. 1938. As Kuhn also explained, children from 'mixed' marriages were not always 'eners van kleur' ['of similar colour'] - hence the situation that 'die kind van ligte kleur saam met blankes in ... openbare plekke ... kan ingaan terwyl die donker broer of suster buite moet bly of tussen die kleurlinge moet sit' ['the child of light hue can go into ... public places together with whites, while the darker brother or sister must stay outside or sit amongst the coloureds']. The social worker gave examples of parents whose darker children could not gain entrance to 'white' schools - some parents refused to place them in 'coloured' schools.

65 D.F. Malan formed the *Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party* (GNP) after the leader of the National Party, General Hertzog, amalgamated his party with the South African Party to form the United Party (UP) in 1932.

1934, the GNP (now the official opposition) campaigned for legislation against 'mixed' marriages and accused the United Party of selling out 'Afrikaner political interests ... by adopting insufficiently aggressive racial policies'.⁶⁶ While the United Party argued that white women's moral fibre made protective laws unnecessary, the GNP held that only legislation against '"mixed" marriages could ensure the maintenance of racial boundaries'.⁶⁷ Hyslop relates this campaign to the rapidly growing numbers of young, female Afrikaans industrial workers 'whose newfound independence threatened the patriarchal relations of white society'.⁶⁸ For Hyslop, the intense agitation around 'mixed' marriages 'performed an important role in re-establishing a gender hierarchy' - Afrikaner men portrayed themselves as the protectors of white women sexually threatened by black men. Many urbanised Afrikaans women were not only free of parental control (hence parents' anxiety over their daughters' sexual conduct), but also played major roles in supporting their families (thus challenging the authority of fathers and husbands). Hyslop argues that 'it was this crisis within the Afrikaner family which fuelled the appeal to racist sentiment' of the GNP in the 'mixed marriage' campaign.⁶⁹

The ACVV's support for the Commission was very probably fuelled by the GNP's agitation, which peaked at the time of the 1938 elections. After all, most western Cape nationalists had followed D.F. Malan after Fusion in 1934.⁷⁰ If the campaign was fashioned by Afrikaner men and appealed to male fears, it certainly also held appeals for women committed to the creation of a white working class and the need to safeguard the morals of Afrikaner *dogters*.

By 1938, the ACVV's interest in 'skadelike volksvoorplanting' ['harmful reproduction of the *volk*'] also incorporated other concerns. Once firmly opposed to birth control, the

66 J. Hyslop, 'White Working-class Women and the Invention of Apartheid: "Purified" Afrikaner Nationalist Agitation for Legislation against 'Mixed' Marriages, 1934-9', *Journal of African History* 36 (1995), p.57.

67 *Ibid.*, p.58.

68 *Ibid.*, p.60.

69 *Ibid.*, p.63. Hyslop also shows that the GNP used this issue in an attempt to mobilise not only the urban petty bourgeoisie, but also the growing Afrikaans urban working class. Traditions of support for the Labour Party in Johannesburg thwarted the GNP; moreover, Afrikaner nationalists were aware that the Garment Workers' Union offered female Afrikaans factory workers an alternative collective identity.

70 M.E. Rothmann, *My Beskeie Deel: 'n Outobiografiese Vertelling* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 1976), pp. 256-58.

ACVV of the 1930s assumed a measured tolerance. Rothmann's pamphlet on 'Onverantwoordelike Ouerskap' ['Irresponsible Parenthood'] not only discussed forcing fathers to care for their families but also the need for 'wetenskaplike, sedelik en liggaamlik gesonde geboortebeperking...' ['scientific, ethical and healthy birth control...']⁷¹ The ACVV's notions of *sedelikheid* now incorporated approval for sex education in schools, albeit with reservations from 'conservative' members. By the mid-1930s, the working-class women who attended 'mothers' afternoons' in Cape Town also received talks about procreation ('Mev. Hendall het die moeders gewys op die samestel van die liggaam terwyl Mnr. van Dyk die vaders gewys het op die vaders se plig teenoor hulle huisgesinne...') ['Mrs Hendall explained the physiology of the body to the women while Mr Van Dyk told the fathers of their duties towards their families...']⁷² Roome linked this programme to the quest for racial purity - as she explained, a lack of sex education contributed to 'rassevermenging' ['miscegenation'].⁷³ While ACVV women were now supportive of clinics that dispensed advice about contraception, they also urged the Department of Health to take over the clinics so as to ensure 'safer and better' development.⁷⁴

But for the ACVV, *skadelike volksvoorplanting* referred most specifically to women whose circumstances and amoral behaviour made them unsuitable for motherhood. This 'volksvraagstuk' ['question concerning the *volk*'] concerned 'moeilike meisies' ['difficult girls'] or as a letter to *Volkswelsyn* explained more expansively, 'Onverantwoordelike Meisies wat hulle skuldig maak aan Seksuele Oortredings' ['Irresponsible Girls who are guilty of Sexual Transgressions'].⁷⁵

71 M.E. Rothmann, *Onverantwoordelike Ouerskap* (Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, nd c. 1933).

72 CA, A1953, A1/1/1, M.E. Rothmann to Mrs Swanepoel, 24 Jan. 1935; Swanepoel to Rothmann, 21 Jan and 6 Feb. 1935. CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/7 (Cape Town), 25 July 1935.

73 *Eendrag*, Nov. 1935, p.108.

74 *Die Burger*, 3 Aug. 1933; PTA, GES, 85/38, 2281; VWN, 919, SW202/1. Some DRC ministers campaigned against the clinics, but Rothmann publicly supported the Cape Town Mother's Clinic.

75 Perusal of the ACVV's correspondence with government departments suggests that 'lastige meisies' could be hopelessly unadaptable ('onaanpasbaar') by the age of ten, and already difficult to place in state or private institutions. They tended to evolve into 'moeilike meisies' - usually *meisies* 'met seksuele ondervinding' ['with sexual experience'], 'wat ly aan seksuele neigings' ['who suffer sexual tendencies'] or 'seksueel-afwykende dogters' ['sexually deviant girls']. They were typically sent to the Luckhoff institute for 'psigopatiese' ['psychopathic'] girls: as one DRC minister on its board explained, their excessive sexuality was due to overactive glands so nothing could be done about it. 'Bandelose vrouens' ['loose women'], not to mention 'slegte

ACVV leadership had itself dealt with a crisis involving pregnant *huishoudskool* students. In 1932, Roome and Rothmann travelled to Wellington when one of their wards fell pregnant. For months, several girls had apparently slipped out of the hostel at night to visit (white) telephone construction workers who were camping opposite the school. Sybil Otto (seventeen years old) and Cornelia Bloemhof (sixteen) were the most frequent visitors.

For Rothmann, the girls' past helped to explain their behaviour. Cornelia was from the eastern Cape. When her father died in 1923, her mother was left to care for five children. She forfeited her 'mother's pension' when she behaved 'irresponsibly' ('het haar sleg gedra') and fell pregnant. In 1925 her children were committed to state institutions. The circumstances of Sybil's family (living in Robertson and Cape Town) had also led to her being committed. Her mother had died, her father was seldom at home, her brother lived with a black woman, and her sister had an illegitimate child. When Cornelia learnt that she was pregnant, the girls convinced a worker to take them to Cape Town, where the ACVV caught up with them. They were taken back to Tulbagh, where they had to appear in court when the worker was charged under the Children's Act. The girls were transferred to other institutions: Sybil to the Luckhoff Institute for 'psychopathic' girls, and Cornelia to a home for single mothers. The ACVV was left to deal with irate parents from the local school who objected to the attendance of *huishoudskool* girls.⁷⁶

For *hoofbestuur* the crux of the matter was inadequate supervision. Rothmann had remarked on the inadequacy of the matron, and by the end of the decade, ACVV leadership remained convinced that part of the problem lay with institutions run by 'onontwikkelde' ['uneducated'] matrons. In *Die Burger*, Rothmann had explained that girls in the *huishoudskole* were cared for by women who knew their wards to be Afrikaners and not

vroue' ['bad women'] were beyond the reach of corrective treatment - the only solution was to remove their children. (PTA, VWN, SWC. 9/170, 861; SWC 9/167, 2198)

76 PTA, VWN, SWC9/170, 861; CA, A1953, A1/2/3 (Rothmann's diary as organising secretary), Feb. 1932; CA, 1/TBH, 1/2/1/20 (Criminal Record and Fines Book, Tulbagh) 24 Feb. 1932; University of Stellenbosch Document Centre (USDC), M.E. Rothmann Collection (MER), 55.M.1.K.L. (32, 33), M.E. Rothmann to A. Geyer, c. 1932. Records on Sybil's subsequent history provide some insight into the experiences of girls committed to the care of privately run, state-supported institutions. See PTA, VWN, SWC 109/85, 1174 for inspectors' reports on the Luckhoff Institute. The Cape Archives Depot contains records from the institute itself (CA, V7). These document her repeated efforts to run away, patrons' assessment of her as difficult and stubborn, and the fact that she gave evidence (at an internal hearing) against a matron who had apparently applied 'excessive' corporal punishment. See also Linda Chisholm, 'Gender and Deviance in South African Industrial Schools and Reformatories for Girls, 1911-1934' in Cherryl Walker (ed.) *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990).

members of a separate class.⁷⁷ But clearly, some of the ACVV's employees did not conform to middle-class standards of education. As Rothmann explained in 1931, the two sub-matrons in charge of Sybil and Cornelia were much like any ordinary 'goeie meisie in huisdiens' ['good servant girl']; she speculated that the matron kept her family photographs behind her bedroom door because she anticipated disapproval from ACVV members. Institutions like the *huishoudskole*, which offered low salaries and required little training of staff, often drew people from poor families. The staff responsible for the errant girls was accordingly given notice. The ACVV concluded that improved training and pay of staff was essential.⁷⁸

The organisation also favoured more specialised institutions for 'ongebalanseerde, onaanpasbare' ['unbalanced, unadaptable'] girls. This soon evolved into requests that the state use existing legislation for forced labour colonies to commit women to an institution that compelled them to work and accommodated their illegitimate children.⁷⁹ From 1937 the ACVV also petitioned the state to legislate in favour of the forcible sterilisation of women 'unsuitable' for motherhood. Their support for a eugenicist solution involving such drastic state intervention was by no means uncommon in South Africa or abroad - medical doctors frequently argued for the forcible sterilisation of people supposedly genetically inclined to mental retardation or criminal behaviour.⁸⁰ If the ACVV's promotion of this solution for *moeilike meisies* was somewhat more unusual, ACVV leadership sometimes came close to

77 *Die Burger*, 'Kindersorg. Die Huishoudskole van die ACVV', 10 March 1928.

78 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.L. (32, 33), M.E. Rothmann to A. Geyer, c. 1932; CA, DRC, V21, 1/3 (ACVV executive minutes), 14 April 1928; CA, A1953, A1/2/1 (Rothmann's diary as organising secretary), May 1928. In fact, the ACVV had also dismissed the previous matron. Her 'dwang en onderdrukking' ['coercion and repression'] had led to several children absconding from the school. Problems with matrons continued in the 1930s. For the ACVV's efforts to redress this through training and better salaries, see CA, DRC, V21, 1/4 (ACVV executive minutes), 12 Feb. 1932; CA, DRC, V21, 1/5, 10 May 1933; CA, A1953 A1/2/3 (Rothmann's diary as organising secretary), executive meeting 25 Feb. 1932; CA, DRC, V21, 1/4, 12 Feb. 1932.

79 CA, A1953, 2/1, 4, Secr. ACVV to Secr. Department of Social Welfare, 3 Jan. 1939.

80 *Eendrag*, Nov. 1934, p.59; Nov. 1935, p.107; 4th quarter 1938, p.90. *Die Burger*, 22 May 1929; PTA, GES, 85/38, 2281; SWC9/170, 861. This concern dated from the mid-thirties. The ACVV's ideas were not unusual in South Africa, and similar plans were by no means limited to Nazi ideologues in Germany. Local eugenicists who favoured compulsory sterilisation also readily quoted arguments from Britain, the United States and Canada. For a discussion of this movement in the South African context, see Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). See also Gisela Bock, 'Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization and the State', *Signs* 8 (3) 1983, p.400.

equating a propensity for sexual transgression with mental 'abnormality'.⁸¹ Although a series of discussions with sympathetic government officials ensued, the state was not prepared to fund an institute for such girls, nor to contemplate any other legislative measures against 'onreelmatige seksuele gedrag' ['abnormal sexual behaviour'].⁸²

But the ACVV's efforts in this regard were insignificant compared to its energetic efforts to transform another aspect of reproduction. The rural health and maternity care projects established by the ACVV from the late 1920s transformed the functioning of many rural ACVVs. A careful examination of this development also yields fascinating information about the particular 'maternalist' philosophy developed by Rothmann, and her efforts to implement her ideas.

4. 'Gevaarlike Moederskap' (Dangerous Motherhood): The ACVV and the Management of Childbirth, 1928-1939

Feminist historians have long criticised medical histories of childbirth for ignoring its social context. In the rich literature on childbirth and its management published over the last two decades, a variety of themes have been explored. A major concern has been to trace the transformation of childbirth from a female-dominated affair to a medical event controlled by men. Scholars have also looked specifically at women's role in maternity care. Thus American studies have explored 'the social relationship between women and their birth attendants, midwifery as a female institution, childbirth and female bonding...'⁸³

81 See Chisholm, 'Gender and Deviance in South African Industrial Schools' for a broader perspective on this subject. In terms of her argument, the ACVV *huishoudskole* to which girls were committed under the Children's Act, as well as the Luckhoff Institute formed part of a larger system of reformatories meant to 'rehabilitate' youths, and industrial schools that provided training whilst preventing 'moral degeneracy'. She also discusses authorities' assumption of a correlation 'between female defiance and deviance', 'expressions of sexuality in young girls and mental deficiency' (p.294).

82 PTA, VWN, SWC9/170, 861. Government officials from the Departments of Health, Social Welfare and Education expressed interest in the ACVV's ideas and held several discussions with the women, but no decisions were taken about matters that required 'takt en diskressie' ['tact and discretion'] as one official put it - in 1940, discussions about suitable institutionalisation still continued.

83 N.S. Dye, 'History of Childbirth in America', *Signs* 6, 1 (1980), p.98.

In South Africa, social historians have thus far neglected to examine women's experience of childbirth, and would have to search hard for medical histories to criticise. The story of Afrikaner women's maternity care projects also touches on an area neglected by feminist scholars - the activities of middle-class women who promoted the transformation of childbirth into a medical event.⁸⁴

In 1930, an article in *Eendrag* introduced a concern that would henceforth motivate much of Rothmann's work in the countryside. Afrikaner mothers had hitherto neglected to consider their own interests: '(d)ie moeders self het nog selde, ten minste in ons land, as moeders saam hulle eie toestand en posiesie beskou en oorweeg' ['the mothers themselves have seldom yet, at least in our country, considered their own condition and position together'].⁸⁵ Rothmann was well aware that the ACVV's past efforts had not only involved material support for white, Afrikaans-speaking families, but also a specific focus on women. But for her, programmes that taught females the skills of motherhood were no longer adequate. Her encounters with women in the rural Cape had taught her that their experience of childbirth was often harsh and bitter. She now argued that '(daar is) nog nooit ondersoek gedoen in geboortetoestande nie.... Die moeders self het nog selde ... as moeders saam hulle eie toestand en posiesie beskou en oorweeg...' ['birth conditions have never yet been examined.... As yet, the mothers themselves have but seldom ... come together to consider their own situation and condition...']⁸⁶

When Rothmann called on 'Afrikaner mothers' to pay attention to inadequate maternity care in 1930, she also knew that this was not an entirely new area of interest for Afrikaans women. Since their inception after the South African War, Afrikaans women's organisations

⁸⁴ Dye provides a comprehensive review of historical studies of childbirth in the United States published in the 1970s. More recently, Jo Murphy-Lawless provides an interesting critique of feminist studies of the medicalisation of childbirth in her article 'The Silencing of Women in Childbirth or Let's Hear it from Bartholomew and the Boys' (*Women's International Forum* 11, 4 (1988), pp.293-9). Like Dye, she observes that from the early 1970s, 'the struggle for power in the birthplace has been presented in feminist writing as one between women practitioners and the emerging profession of male midwives, with the latter gradually gaining control at the expense of the former...' (p.294). Most scholars would seem to agree with Ann Oakley that 'professional' midwives and nurses were appendages of a male-controlled medical hierarchy, and have not probed women's reasons for promoting the transformation of childbirth into a medical event ('Wisewoman and Medicine Man: Changes in the Management of Childbirth' in J. Mitchell and A. Oakley (eds), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), p.18).

⁸⁵ M.E. Rothmann, 'Gevaarlike Moederskap', *Eendrag*, April 1930, p.22.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

had sometimes addressed the care of parturient women. However, their approach to this issue changed over the years - and Rothmann's initiative represented a further, significant shift.

At first, childbirth had not been a public issue. The ACVV's welfare work meshed with private forms of sociability, and help for parturient women was extended in the privacy of homes. Typically, local ACVVs paid doctors' fees and provided parturient women with food or clothes. In the late 1910s, a new project that specifically dealt with maternity care was launched in the Transvaal. The ACVV's sister organisation, the *Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie* (together with others such as the *Transvaal Vroue Nasionale Party*) argued that Afrikaans women living in rural districts were often aided by inefficient 'lay' midwives, and established a training school for midwives under contract to work in rural areas.⁸⁷ In the mid-1920s at least one local ACVV also established a maternity clinic with qualified staff. The hitherto private experience of childbirth was slowly becoming a public issue.

However, although the *volksgesondheid* campaign of the mid-1920s sought to involve women, it focused on children's health. A few female correspondents to *Die Burger* raised the issue of maternity care for poor women - otherwise women's reproductive needs were hardly mentioned. By 1928, when state funding for welfare projects was transferred from financially hard-pressed local authorities to provincial bodies, the ACVV already had a number of rural health committees.⁸⁸ But it was soon apparent that the ACVV's health projects did not only focus on child care.

In 1929 Rothmann interrupted her research for the Carnegie Commission on birth conditions amongst the white, Afrikaans-speaking poor in the countryside to visit a northern branch. She explained that the ACVV's new health policy differed from the government's:

Die ACVV het nou 'n ander rigting ingeslaan [naamlik] Volksgesondheid. Die Administrateur stel baie belang in kinderverpleging.... In kinder- en ander siekte verpleging word veel belanggestel maar daar is nog min gedoen in verband met kraam verpleging ... sy gaan saam met 'n kommissie wat ondersoek doen wat die oorsaak is dat daar soveel arm mense is; maar sy gaan met 'n tweede doel om geboorte toestande te ondersoek.⁸⁹

87 C. Searle, *The History of the Development of Nursing in South Africa, 1652-1960* (Cape Town: Struik, 1965), p.350; *Eendrag* 2 (42), 1938, p.1.

88 Searle, *The History of the Development of Nursing in South Africa*, p.256; *Die Huisgenoot*, 18 Sept. 1925, p.45; USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (13), A. Geyer to M.E. Rothmann, 16 April 1929.

89 CA, A1953, Add 1/5/7/1/1 (Kenhardt), 26 Oct. 1929.

[The ACVV has now struck out on a new road, namely People's Health. The Administrator is very interested in children's health.... In children's and other nursing schemes there is much interest but very little has been done in connection with maternity care ... she [Rothmann] is going to enquire, along with a committee, into why there are so many poor people, but she is going with a second purpose, to enquire into birth conditions]

According to Rothmann, an integral part of the ACVV's *volksgesondheid* programmes was the establishment of maternity clinics. At the same meeting, she encouraged the women to organise for better conditions:

Hier in Kenhardt se distrik is daar(aan) 'n groot behoefte. Dit gebeur dikwels dat vrouens nie hulp het nie, deur dat hulle dit nie kan bekostig nie.... Die vrouens meen dit moet so wees en dit moet nie; die vrou en die kind is wêrd om 'n goeie behandeling te kry. Die vrouens moet werk vir verbetering...⁹⁰

[Here in the district of Kenhardt there is a great need. It often happens that women have no help, because they cannot afford it.... The women think this should be so and it should not; women and children deserve good treatment. The women should work towards improvement...]

Rothmann's plans resembled the challenges of women elsewhere to male politicians who had 'called for redistributive measures ... on behalf of infants, the race, and the nation, not women themselves'.⁹¹ Her project differed in scale from the local initiatives of the past decade: she urged that health committees across the Cape should employ midwives. A more significant departure was her insistence that maternity care merited government funds - a demand apparently not echoed by many female maternalists in other countries.⁹² The ACVV's executive now argued that the provision of adequate maternity care for poor whites would serve state interests. It was also convinced that the success of its programmes was of crucial importance to Afrikaner nationalism.

Afrikaans women's increased concern with the provision of maternity care in rural areas was crucially linked to a more general change in attitude towards childbirth as medical science redefined women's reproductive needs. Economic transformation in the late nineteenth

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ S. Koven and S. Michel 'Introduction: Mother Worlds' in S. Koven and S. Michel (eds) *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.18-19.

⁹² Perusal of the literature on movements for maternal and infant welfare does not provide instances where women campaigned for state-supported maternity care. For the most part, the medical profession was apparently responsible for such developments. In the United States, the Shepard-Towner Act of 1921 briefly funded the provision of instruction about nutrition and hygiene, but did not provide poor women with material or medical assistance. See Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

century, the support of a more interventionist state, and rapid developments in medical science had facilitated the consolidation of a well-paid medical profession in South Africa, and its increasingly successful competition against 'lay' healers.⁹³ Most doctors agreed that childbirth could only be managed properly by formally trained attendants. Correspondents to medical journals warned of the dangers of 'vaginal examinations by untrained women' who paid not 'the slightest attention to asepsis...'⁹⁴ Writers also emphasised that, given the rareness of 'labours which can be accurately described as normal in every respect', midwifery required 'the long training and experience of a well-educated person.'⁹⁵

If their black, poor and rural counterparts were hardly touched by the medicalisation of childbirth, white middle-class women in the larger towns increasingly replaced midwives with medical men.⁹⁶ With the relative comfort of anaesthesia and the (at first dubious) merits of newfangled instruments, perceptions of 'naturalness' were slowly replaced by obstetricians' notions of pregnancy and childbirth as pathological and thus warranting the active interference of medical science.

Rothmann's attitude towards childbirth suggest that ACVV members were also absorbing medical sciences redefinition of women's reproductive experience. She certainly thought of

93 W.H. Maxwell, 'The Use of Forceps', *J. Med. Ass. S. Afr.* 2, 14 April 1928, pp.343-4. Also, for example, O.J. Currie, 'Uterine Displacements', *S. Afr. Med. Rec.* 21, 28 July 1923, pp.326-9; D.H. Wessels, 'Conservative Treatment in Gynaecology', *S. Afr. Med. Rec.* 24, 13 March 1926, pp.108-11; T. Trail, 'Treatment of Puerperal Fever', *S. Afric. Med. Rec.* 24, 13 March 1926, pp.106-108; J.A. du Toit, 'Two Interesting Cases', *J. Med. Ass. S. Afr.* 2, 12 May 1928, pp.240-1. (The *South African Medical Record* was renamed the *Journal of the Medical Association of South Africa* in 1927, when it became affiliated to the British Medical Association. The new journal also incorporated the *Medical Journal of South Africa*.) Frequent articles by specialists - and general practitioners' exchange of 'interesting cases' in the Clinical Notes column of medical journals - suggest that medical men in the towns and cities practised obstetrics more frequently and enthusiastically from the early 1920s. By the mid-1920s, doctors' increasing reluctance to 'give Nature a fair chance' had prompted debates around the pros and cons of the new interventionist approach to gynaecology and obstetrics.

94 K. Bremer, 'Vaginal Examinations By Untrained Women', *S. Afr. Med. Rec.* 23, 8 Aug. 1925, p.347. See also the correspondence that followed this article: 12 Sept. 1925, pp.395-6; 14 Nov. 1925, pp.395-6; Bremer, 'Applied Evolution', *J. Med. Ass. S. Afr.* 2, 14 April 1928, p.574.

95 J. Bruce-Bays, 'The doctor, the midwife and the patient', *J. Med. Ass. S. Afr.* 2, 14 April 1928, p.177.

96 Bremer, 'Vaginal Examinations by Untrained Women'; Wessels, 'Conservative Treatment in Gynaecology'. Doctors' complaints in the mid-1920s that 'the status of the untrained is rising' probably reflected their increased competition with 'lay' healers rather than any real threat posed by the latter. Medical men had a steady clientele who could afford steep doctors' fees, and reported that patients no longer objected to surgical procedures.

pregnancy in terms of illness. If some of the more distressing cases fully warranted Rothmann's descriptions of 'siekte op die Veld' ['illness on the *Veld*'], she also described uncomplicated childbirth in similar terms: '(i)n die aand het sy siek geword, en in die nag ... het sy geboorte gegee aan 'n kindjie' ['in the evening she became ill, and in the night ... she gave birth to a child']. Or as she sadly noted of a Namaqualand woman shouldering the double burdens of farm work and child care, '(a)lle melkery, beeste ook, was dus in haar hande. Sy moes maar aanpak, siek of gesond, swanger of nie. Die swangerskappe kon nie as siekte beskou word nie' ['all the milking and the cattle was in her hands. She had to tackle it, whether ill or healthy, pregnant or not. Pregnancy could not be seen as illness'].⁹⁷

But given older perceptions that reproduction held dangers for women, and endless folk-remedies for treatment, the crucial difference between this and older attitudes was perhaps not so much the emphasis on illness. The new element was rather the conviction that doctors and nurses bolstered by medical science, rather than wisewomen backed by herbalists' lore, should treat women in labour. Rothmann herself had professional help for the birth of her first child. Significant numbers of the women who helped formulate and execute ACVV policy undoubtedly had similar experiences. At least some female correspondents to *Die Burger* also demanded that the state should subsidise maternity clinics for poor whites - with specific reference to their own experience as women who could afford professional help.⁹⁸

However, that middle-class women's notions of adequate maternity care were influenced by the medical establishment only partly explains why female Afrikaans speakers wanted the Afrikaans poor treated by qualified midwives. Medical men were not alone in attempting to redefine and supply women's reproductive needs. While female philanthropists certainly absorbed medical science's views of maternity care, they sought to mould women's experience of childbirth to their particular concerns. Efforts to relieve Afrikaans women of painful and dangerous childbirth experiences were inextricably linked to nationalist aims.

The new interest in maternity care coincided with the idealisation of motherhood in Afrikaner nationalism. Given that women were important as reproducers of the *volk*, it is perhaps not surprising that female Afrikaner nationalists now focused on an aspect of women's reproductive needs. Such nationalist sympathies also explain why women did not simply organise for the replacement of 'lay' midwives with qualified birth attendants.

97 USDC, MER, 55.M.3 (Carnegie Commission Investigations, 1929) (2), Garies 36.

98 See *Die Burger*, 17 Jan. 1925, letter from 'a mother of three children, who had the privilege of always having the services of a skilled doctor and nurse' (my translation). She urged that poor Afrikaans women should also be treated by trained midwives.

Nasionale vroue, intent on maintaining (or establishing) notions of racial purity amongst their poorer sisters, were concerned that many midwives were black.⁹⁹ Nationalist convictions were also central to the *volksgesondheid* policy developed by Rothmann from the late 1920s. Like the small-scale projects of the previous decade, hers was motivated by the racial exclusiveness of Afrikaner nationalism.

And yet her support for state-funded maternity care requires more careful consideration. In fact, a sophisticated set of ideas about women's place in the 'poor white problem' lay at the heart of the ACVV's new policy. In large part, it was Rothmann herself who formulated, publicised and implemented these ideas. Her views about the need for state-funded maternity care merit closer analysis.

Rothmann's travel diary of 1928 reflected an acute awareness of women's subordinate role in Afrikaans communities. Encounters with the careworn women who attended her meetings in isolated rural areas confirmed that '... die lewe is hard vir 'n vrou' ['... life is hard for a woman']. These encounters also suggested that to organise women around their own needs would be difficult: 'die vrouens, in plaas van saam te staan om die lewe vir hulle makliker te maak, sal liever saamstaan om dit vir die kinders, en vir die mans, makliker te maak' ['the women, instead of standing together to make life easier for themselves, would rather stand together to make life easier for the children and the men'].¹⁰⁰

Rothmann wanted women to organise around their reproductive needs (and officials to recognise that those needs merited attention). But more complex motivations than a woman's empathy were behind suggestions that women should prioritise their own interests. It was significant that while Rothmann interviewed mothers to determine birth conditions and

99 The SAVF's own explanation of its decision to launch a training programme for midwives was deeply racist: 'The League [for Afrikaans Mothers] and its work ... is the direct result of the complaint of a white woman from the backveld of Lydenburg, who in the hour of her greatest need had to turn to a Kaffir woman for help. Her case was typical of thousands in our country...' (*Die Boerevrou*, Jan. 1926, p.12). In the Cape, the few women who questioned Afrikaner nationalists' prevalent conviction that high infant mortality rates should primarily be combatted with campaigns to improve women's knowledge of child care expressed similar sentiments. As 'Nurse' asked readers of *Die Burger*:

'Has one of our great learned Ministers ever asked if something has been done to erect free maternity hospitals for our poor Afrikaans women? Has our Minister of Health ever made an enquiry and asked how many midwives there are in our small towns and our districts? So many of our poor women must get help from Hotnot women who are so filthy, that is why so many little ones are taken from us. Our Afrikaner women are not yet Kaffirs who can manage like animals' (my translation, *Die Burger*, 7 Jan. 1925).

100 CA, A1/2/1, Aug. 1928.

assembled rural women to explain the ACVV's plans, she never explored poor women's own ideas of their needs. In fact, Rothmann's concern to relieve women of painful and life-threatening experiences meshed with middle-class notions of women's nurturing and socialising roles, and nationalist beliefs of their place in the *volk*.¹⁰¹

Like the advocates of *moederkunde* (mothercraft) in the *volksgesondheid* programmes of previous years, Rothmann was convinced that mothers were the lynch-pins. Efforts to combat the threat that rising levels of poverty posed to a racially defined people should revolve around them. Writing to a friend while on her Carnegie travels, she explained:

Kyk, in hierdie groot land, hierdie geïsoleerde lewenstoestande, hierdie armoed waarin ons mense soos slagvee al nader en nader na vernieling aangestoot word, is dinge... anders as in ander lande, en onsettend veel hang van die wit moeders af...¹⁰²

[Look, in this huge country, these isolated living conditions, this poverty in which our people are driven to destruction like cattle to the slaughter, things are ... different from other countries, and terribly much depends on the white mothers...]

In Rothmann's usage, 'mother' usually specifically referred to white women - her explicit use of the adjective served to emphasise her anxiety about the supposedly uniquely South African threat that a black, impoverished majority held for to 'white' Afrikaans identity.¹⁰³ In her final report she elaborated on 'the importance and indispensability of the mother as a home and social educator, that is as inculcator of the social sense in the child...'¹⁰⁴ But while her ideas were firmly rooted in the gendered notions of earlier *volksgesondheid*

101 As Koven and Michel point out in their introduction to *Mothers of a New World*, middle-class women free from domestic drudgery and with the educational and financial resources to campaign for social welfare programs and policies often defined the needs of poor and working-class women and 'claimed the right to instruct and regulate' their conduct. Most remained oblivious to 'the ways in which the economic and social realities of client women's daily lives, as well as their own cultural preferences, undermined the possibility of realizing gender solidarity' (p.7).

102 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (10), M.E. Rothmann to A. Geyer, 4 May 1929.

103 In this respect, it is instructive to compare the pervasiveness of eugenic elements in (for example) the maternalist discourse of many white, middle-class, American reformers. Alisa Klaus discusses this in her contribution to *Mothers of a New World*, 'Depopulation and Race Suicide: Maternalism and Pronatalist Ideologies in France and the United States'. In *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare and the State*, Taylor also discusses concerns for 'racial progress' and 'the perfection of the race' harboured by 'sentimental' maternalists in the United States during the early twentieth century, as well as by 'feminist' maternalists of the 1920s - reformers who otherwise held divergent opinions on women's role.

104 M.E. Rothmann, *The Poor White Problem in South Africa. Report of the Carnegie Commission, Part V: The Mother and Daughter of the Poor Family* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932), p.175.

projects, she was also convinced that educative programmes would not suffice. At the root of women's inadequate performance as mothers were material conditions in an economically backward and socially stratified countryside. The burden of work on the wives of *bywoners* and labourers, together with the lack of proper care during pregnancy and childbirth, meant that they could not be good mothers. She later summarised her reasons for advocating improved maternity care in a memorandum to the Secretary of Public Health :

Ek het op 'n spoor gekom wat my tot een van die grondoorsake van maatskaplike agteruitgang gebring het. Dit was die feit ... dat die moeder die eerste vormer van die burger is; daarby dat sy 'n uiters belangrike vormer is; en dat gebrek aan vormingsbekwaamheid by haar 'n onherstelbare skade aan 'n volk berokken ... dit het geblyk dat die werk van moeders in sulke streke so ooreisend was dat dit hulle lewensduurte ingekort het. As die een geslag na die ander van moeders in sulke streke onder wat werklik 'n dodelike druk was geleef het, was dit begryplik dat hulle as moeders minder goeie opvoedsters sou moes word; hulle was te moeg...¹⁰⁵

[I came upon a spoor that led me to one of the basic causes of social regression ... this was the fact ... that the mother is the first shaper of the citizen; furthermore, that she is an extremely important shaper; and that a lack of skill in shaping can cause a people untold damage ... it became clear that the work of mothers in such areas was so overburdening that it reduced their life expectancy. If one generation of mothers after another had lived in such areas under what was really a deathly pressure, it was understandable that they as mothers would become less effective educators; they were too tired...]

This was the context for her concern with birth conditions: her conviction that maternity care was crucially important for Afrikaner nationalism, and merited state funding. Hardship during pregnancy and childbirth, she argued, adversely affected 'die gehalte van die vrou, as produseerder en grootmaker van die kind...' ['the quality of the woman, as producer and raiser of the child...']¹⁰⁶ 'Gevaarlike moederskap' ['Dangerous motherhood'] called for action not only because women's lives and health were under threat, but also because the *volk* itself was endangered. By providing maternity care, the ACVV would help fashion Afrikaans women into the nurturers and educators that Afrikaner nationalism needed:

... behoeftege moeders ... kan hulself nie help nie - maar die kindertjies kom nog steeds; van die moeders word steeds moederskap geeis. Tot hulle eie lewensgevaar. Ons vrouens moet dink en planne maak om moederskap buite gevaar te stel. Ons is 'n volk: ons het 'n werk en 'n roeping: ons moet goeie burgers hê; en sonder gesonde, moedige moeders is dit onmoontlik om goeie burgers te verkry.¹⁰⁷

[... needy mothers ... cannot help themselves - but the children still come; motherhood is still claimed of the mothers. To their own deadly danger. We women must think and make plans to take motherhood out of danger. We are a people; we have a task and a calling: we need good citizens; and without healthy, courageous mothers it is impossible to get good citizens.]

105 CA, A1953, 2/3, 9, M.E. Rothmann to Secr. of Public Health, c.1939.

106 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (10), M.E. Rothmann to A. Geyer, 4 May 1929.

107 Rothmann, 'Gevaarlike Moederskap', p.24.

In fact, Rothmann sometimes argued that it was because maternity care for the poor offered opportunities for social upliftment that women were interested in this issue. Women could also bring their uniquely feminine insight and skill to the birthing room - hence their suitability for contributing to 'upliftment' at this time. Her memorandum to the Department of Public Health encapsulated crucial aspects of the reasoning behind the ACVV's maternity projects for the 1930s:

Daar is so 'n sterk maatskaplike kant aan die kwessie van arm kraamverpleging dat dit baie natuurlik is dat vroue daaraan vashou. Dit is 'n uiters waardevol maatskaplike werk nie alleen van die gesondheidskant nie, maar omdat dit so *ad feminam* is. Ek wonder of daar een tyd in die lewe van die normale vrou is ... wanneer sy so vatbaar vir leiding en simpatie is as wanneer sy in die kraambed lê. Die goeie verpleegster kan haar dan lesse leer wat maklik en ook diep inslaan; sy is dan afhanklik en ontvanklik. Sy leer in die ordentlike kraaminrigtingkie, veral wanneer eenvoudig ingerig, hoe mooi sindelikheid en ordelikheid is, en hoe onmisbaar; sy dink na oor haar eie huweliks-en huislike instellings; sy vra en kry raad; waar anders sal sy oor sulke lewensbelangrike sake gesaghebbende raad Kry? Nêrens nie....

Bo alles kry die armmoeder, wanneer sy so oor veertien dae die voorwerp van bestudeerde sorg gewees het, en haar - soos tuis altyd die geval is - oor niemand se bediening moet kwel nie, die indruk dat sy as moeder die moeite werd is om so behandel te word. Dit is 'n waardevolle les vir 'n opvoedster...¹⁰⁸

[There is such a strong social aspect to the question of maternity care for the poor that it is only natural that women hold on to it. It is extremely useful social work, not only because of health considerations, but also because it is so *ad feminam*. I wonder whether there is one time in the life of the normal woman ... when she is as susceptible to guidance and sympathy as when she lies in the maternity bed. The good nurse can then teach her lessons that penetrate easily and deeply; she is dependent and receptive. In the proper maternity hospital, especially when it is simply furnished, she learns how good cleanliness and order are, and how essential; she considers her own matrimonial and domestic situation; she asks for and gets advice; where else shall she get authoritative advice about such vitally important matters? Nowhere else....

Above all, when the poor-mother has been for fourteen days the object of studied care, and has not - as is the case at home - had to worry about serving others, she gets the impression that she as mother is worth the trouble of being treated in this way. That is a valuable lesson for her as educator...]

If the major theme underlying many feminist accounts of the chronology of birth management is that of control,¹⁰⁹ this picture of ignorant *armmoeder* ['poor-mother'] meeting knowledgeable nurse suggests that nationalist concerns gave the South African version of the 'reproductive takeover' a peculiar twist. For many feminist historians of childbirth in America and Europe, the central issue has been its transition from a predominantly female affair to a medical event controlled by male professionals.¹¹⁰ Thus

108 CA, A1953, 2/3, 9, Rothmann to Secr. of Public Health, c.1939.

109 Dye, 'Review Essay: History of Childbirth in America', p.98.

110 Murphy-Lawless, 'The silencing of women in childbirth', p.294.

Oakley argues that although the trained personnel that first replaced 'lay' midwives were mostly women, their skills were 'defined predominantly in relation to the expertise and omniscience of the male professional...'¹¹¹ While this analysis is broadly applicable to South Africa, where the medical profession was also a powerful patriarchal institution, a primary focus on male-female hierarchies cannot adequately explain the ACVV's venture.

Rothmann's description signals a crucial change in the social relationship between parturient women and birth attendants. While familiar women - their social equals or inferiors - helped them in their own home, rural women may often have retained a measure of control. Relations with 'lay' midwives were informed by ties of friendship, family and community. Annie Nolte explained: '... die een vrou help die ander. Een is 'n ouma en een is nie een nie' ['... the one woman helps the other. One is a granny and the other isn't'].¹¹²

Even so, solidarity between women was undercut by divisions of race and class. Rothmann's personal recollections pointed to racial divides: 'in my tyd in my dorp [moes ek] ook maar van 'n kleurling "Ouma Annie" gehelp ... word by gebrek aan ander' ['in my time in my town, (I had) to make do ... with the help of a coloured "Granny Annie" through lack of any other'].¹¹³ Moreover, when women were tended by midwives who practised their skills for economic survival, the extent of female solidarity must often have been limited by their different social standing. And feminist scholars have correctly warned against romanticising the lay midwife as a 'persecuted female protoprofessional'.¹¹⁴ What Rothmann called her 'horror stories' about incompetent *ou vrouens* like *Tant* Hessie of Soebatsfontein are a powerful antidote to any such temptation.¹¹⁵

In Rothmann's scenario, the 'lay' midwife was replaced by a professionally trained nurse, firmly in control of a 'decent little maternity clinic'. Here the crucial change in the management of childbirth was not the establishment of male control: rather, 'lay' midwives were replaced by women who had absorbed middle-class and nationalist notions of women's place in society. In fact, that childbirth was still *ad feminam* was of central importance to

111 Oakley 'Wisewoman and Medicine Man: Changes in the Management of Childbirth', p.18.

112 Interview with A. Nolte, Upington, 19 July 1990.

113 CA, A1953, A1/1/1, 31 May 1935.

114 Dye, 'Review Essay: History of Childbirth in America', p.99.

115 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.7, M.E. Rothmann to J.H. Conradie, 25 Oct. 1931. See Chapter Three, pp. 164-5 for her descriptions of countryside midwives' practices.

Rothmann. The special bond created between participants in this intimate and exclusively female experience made for a unique educational opportunity. The parturient woman, rendered dependant and helpless at a crucial point in a life that centered on motherhood (and 'not her normal self' as Rothmann explained elsewhere)¹¹⁶ was receptive to the advice of a nurse schooled in this vocation.

That ties of community should still inform their relationship was also important for the success of this nationalist scheme: nurses had to be Afrikaans and, if possible, work in their own district.¹¹⁷ But if language and culture bound them together, it did so within the new hierarchy. In the nurse's eyes, the patient's reproductive function and her poverty were inseparable: she was an 'armoeder' ['poor-mother'] in need of education and guidance. As such, she was the passive 'voorwerp van bestudeerde sorg' ['object of *informed* care']; an educated, professionally trained woman gave 'leiding ... en gesaghebbende raad' ['guidance and ... *authoritative* advice'] (my emphasis).

The professional midwives employed by the ACVV, then, had a role that extended beyond mere medical duties. A western Cape branch advertised for a qualified midwife with general nursing experience who would do home-visits, present lectures and demonstrations, and improve health conditions in the district.¹¹⁸ Successful applicants were 'meisies wat ... moet help met landsorganisasie' ['girls ... who must help with organising the country'], who were to be used for 'landsdiens' ['national service'].¹¹⁹ Rothmann urged Van Wyksdorp to employ a nurse by pointing to 'die agteruitgaan van die Afrikaner volk en ook wat nodig is om hulle weer op die been te bring...' ['the regression of the Afrikaner people and what is necessary to invigorate them again'].¹²⁰ Branches advertised in *Die Kerkbode* - where properly religious nurses would see them. *Gesondheidskomitee* (health committee) rules also specified that nurses must be Afrikaans.¹²¹ The appropriate candidate for work

116 Rothmann, *Mother and Daughter in the Poor Family*, p.175.

117 CA, A1953, 2/9, 116, M.E. Rothmann to M. Laubscher, 3 Dec. 1936.

118 CA, A1953, A1/2/1, May 1928.

119 CA, A1953, 2/9, 116, M.E. Rothmann to M. Laubscher, 3 Dec. 1936; CA, DRC, V21, 2/4/1, 3 March 1936.

120 CA, A1953, Add 1/14/3/1/1/1 (Van Wyksdorp) 16 March 1935.

121 CA, A1953, A1/2/1, July 1928. See also CA, A1953, 2/29, 116, M.E. Rothmann to M. Luckhoff, 5 April 1939. Rothmann rejected otherwise able candidates because they were English-speaking. (Although Luckhoff had no problems with the candidate - letter 15 April 1939.)

involving the social upliftment was herself 'respectable'. If not actually middle-class, she had absorbed middle-class notions respectability. As executive member Anna Geyer explained to a rural branch:

Ek voel altyd dat so 'n verpleegster wat onder ons arm mense werk 'n agtergrond moet hê. Haar werk is nie net verpleging nie, maar opheffing en opvoeding van die gesinne met wie sy in aanraking kom. En as die meisie nie self uit 'n ordentlike, fatsoenlike ordelike gesin kom nie, hoe kan sy dan die andere >ophef< leer?¹²²

[I always believe that such a nurse that works among our poor people should have a background. Her work is not just nursing, but upliftment and education of the families with which she comes into contact. And if the girl herself does not come from a proper and decent family, how then can she teach others to improve themselves?]

5. From *Armmoeders* to *Volksmoeders*?: Implementing the ACVV's Maternity Care Programmes.

Such were the ACVV's plans for maternity care. But how were they implemented, and with what success? Rothmann was only too aware of the obstacles she faced in moulding the ACVV's health programmes according to her concerns. At first, funding for maternity care could only be had in a roundabout way, because state officials were only willing to subsidise nurses' salaries when 'Kindersorg' ['Child Care'] was involved.¹²³

But after several years of promoting their ideas about health work and maternity care, leading women commented on a fast-growing relationship with the Department of Health. As ACVV president Minni Roome emphasised at the organisation's congress in 1935, 'die samewerking met die Staat is sterk aan ontwikkel, veral in verband met gesondheidswerk' ['cooperation with the State is developing quickly, especially as regards health work']. As Rothmann also remarked, her growing correspondence with government mostly concerned the rural health committees. ACVV branches were now receiving subsidies for nurses in their employ.¹²⁴ Rothmann judged that their improved relationship with the Department of Health could be partly attributed to women's voting power:

[ek het] ... op Pretoria met die mense self gaan praat and established a line of communication.... In kort, die naam ACVV bring (as ek dit nie baie verkeerd oordeel nie) aandag van regeringskantore; hulle het respek vir ons, en dit beïnvloed

122 CA A1953, A1/1/1, A. Geyer to M. Luckhoff, 12 May 1934.

123 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.7, M.E. Rothmann to J.H. Conradie, 25 Oct. 1931.

124 CA, A1953, 2/3, M.E. Rothmann to 'Vriendin', 3 Sept. [1935].

die loop van onse werk ... dat die toeken van vrouestemreg aan ons veel gewig bygebring het, is nie altemit nie.¹²⁵

[I went to Pretoria to speak to the people myself and established a line of communication.... In short, the name ACVV draws the attention of the government offices; they respect us and this influences the development of our work ... there's no doubt that votes for women gave us a lot more clout.]

The advent of government-subsidised health committees also introduced new and somewhat varied modes of organisation for *platteland* branches. Children's health projects involved collaboration with local schools; the employment of nurses likewise involved negotiation and collaboration with state officials and local organisations.¹²⁶ In some towns, the DRC's 'Armesorg' commissions for poor relief registered for health work and ACVV members served on their health committees. Elsewhere, *hoofbestuur* and ACVV branches negotiated with the local church to cede its registration to the women's organisation for health work.¹²⁷ In some isolated northern Cape towns, *hoofbestuur* encouraged branches to form health committees, but to co-opt representatives from the local church, town and divisional councils, the *Vroue Landbou Vereniging* (Women's Agricultural Association) and Child Welfare.

Many *platteland* women who had previously worked mostly by themselves when providing for local *arm blankes*, now served on committees together with representatives from other organisations and male officials. This involved a shift from the previously semi-private functioning of many branches (in ACVV member's homes, or as women-only meetings at the local church hall). Now, Afrikaans women's participation in civic affairs on the *platteland* entailed more interaction with various officials and professionals, many of whom were male. Articles in *Eendrag* were also indicative of *hoofbestuur*'s efforts to direct branches' interaction with other organisations and government bodies.¹²⁸

While a number of health committees were well established and could receive state subsidies for nurses by the mid-1930s, one major obstacle to the success of the ACVV's project remained a chronic shortage of suitable nurses. Throughout the 1930s the ACVV agitated

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Eendrag* 'Op reis vir die ACVV', Oct. 1931, pp.83-91.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, Jan. 1936, p.7. The Department of Health only subsidised one organisation per district.

¹²⁸ *Eendrag*, 'Samewerking van ons takke met ander liggame', Jan. 1936, pp.14-16; 'Moet vroue op munisipaliteite dien?', July 1930, p.10; 'Die ACVV en die magistrate', April 1931, p.29.

without success for the training of more nurses.¹²⁹ Nurses were in short supply in South Africa and - more pertinently for an organisation that wanted to employ Afrikaans-speaking whites - the country had few training facilities. Training schools for midwives were private and profit-making. Nursing schools were also 'either profit-making concerns or semi-voluntary public hospitals verging on bankruptcy...'¹³⁰ Their apprenticeship systems of training exploited probationer nurses as cheap labour and kept numbers as low as possible. By the end of the 1930s, the ACVV still employed a relatively small number of health workers in rural areas. The situation would only improve after the Second World War when the state channelled large amounts of funds into public health.¹³¹

While the state made no significant intervention, the ACVV arranged for the state-sponsored training of a limited number of midwives at a maternity hospital in Cape Town. By committing students to working for rural ACVVs, the organisation thought to ensure at least a limited supply of midwives for their project. But the ACVV still experienced much difficulty in getting nurses and midwives to work in the countryside. If urban maternity and general hospitals exploited and overworked their female staff, the isolated and primitive conditions of rural employment were also unattractive. This was daily life for a Karoo nurse in 1927:

... she rides on horse-back to her cases, & often has to spend three or four hours a day in the saddle when she goes to the more distant farms, but she is all the time on duty and on call, Sundays included ... twice in the month she has been here her day off has been spoilt by her being urgently called out to a case...¹³²

In Upington of the 1930s, the nurse did not even have a horse at her disposal:

Daar was ... 'n distriksverpleegster, daar was toe nog nie 'n hospitaal nie.... En sy't al die distansies, sy het myle ver gestap, daar was nie vervoer nie, na die mense toe. En sy, o haar voete was later, altyd toe later plat sandale gedra, want die voete was later so gedaan...¹³³

[There was ... a district nurse, there wasn't a hospital yet then.... And she, all the distances, she walked miles, there was no transport, to get to the people. And she, oh, her feet were later, always later wore flat sandals, because the feet were so worn out...]

129 Lambrechts and Theron, *Vrouevolksdiens*, pp.90-91. See also CA, DRC, V21, 2/4/1, ACVV secr. to Cape Provincial Administrator, 3 July 1936.

130 Searle, *The History of the Development of Nursing in South Africa*, p.254.

131 *Ibid.*, pp.254-7.

132 CA, A1953, A 1/1/1, J.M. Buckton to M.E. Rothmann, 27 Dec. 1927.

133 Interview with M. Abel.

More pertinently, employment in the countryside was often uncertain, and payment low. A midwife in Namaqualand, who found that the health committee employing her could not afford to pay and that she had to survive on a partial government subsidy and sporadic fees from patients, wrote a desperate letter:

... ek wis nie wat om te doen nie. Maar nou het ek besluit om maar met die subsidie van £30 per jaar nog 'n tyd [so te] verpleeg, want ek sien nog nie 'n uitweg hoe die plaaslike ACVV dit kan doen om hier 'n verpleegster aan te stel nie. Die verskillende liggame wat verantwoordelik is vir die geld is net so arm behalwe die afdelingsraad. Alles is so onseker dat ek bang is. Nou wil ek u vriendelik vra om aub u invloed te gebruik om vir my die subsidie verhoog te kry as die Departement my £5 per maand gee dan kan ek meer arm gevalle behandel...¹³⁴

[... I did not know what to do. But now I have decided to nurse for a while longer with the subsidy of £30 a year, because I do not see how the ACVV can manage to appoint a nurse here. The different bodies that are responsible for the money are just as poor except for the divisional council. Everything is so uncertain that I am scared. Now I want to ask you kindly to please use your influence to raise the subsidy if the Department gives me £5 per month I can treat more poor cases...]

In terms of the training scheme for midwives, branches that recommended candidates also had to provide employment for them. But ACVVs in isolated rural areas were often too poor to comply. It was precisely in these regions that medical services for women were least developed: 'we find that the least amount of local effort always coincides with the greatest need.'¹³⁵ Rothmann told a graduate whom the ACVV sponsored for a midwifery course that rural communities could pay very little, but still asked her choose employment on the *platteland* instead of in Cape Town. She was offered a small contribution for the first year (£36) from the ACVV executive 'met beste wense, en waardering vir jou moed om jou volk te dien' ['with best wishes, and appreciation of your courage to serve your people'].¹³⁶ Rothmann was well aware that many women, less eager to sacrifice their interests for *volksdiens* (service to the people), preferred the low but regular wages of urban hospitals:

Wat nou egter herhaaldelik gebeur is dat die meisies, na hulle klaar is, sê dit gaan so uitsers swaar om werk in die buiteplekke te kry dat hulle maar liever in een of ander verpleeginrigting in die stede gaan.... Dit is nie net met onse ACVV meisies dat dit gebeur nie, maar met ander ook.¹³⁷

[But what is now happening time and again is that the girls, after they have done, say that it is so extremely difficult to get work in the outlying areas that they rather go to one or other of the nursing institutions in the city.... This does not only happen with our ACVV girls, but also with others.]

134 CA, A1953, A1/1/1, J. Preis to M.E. Rothmann, 6 Dec. 1935.

135 *Ibid.*, M.E. Rothmann to M. Thompson (Secr. Department of Public Health), 12 Nov. 1934.

136 *Ibid.*, M.E. Rothmann to F. Faul, 29 Nov. 1934.

137 *Ibid.*, M.E. Rothmann to Mrs Coetzee, 12 Nov. 1934.

Sulke meisies word ook gretig in die stede deur Kraaminrigtings (private) aangeneem, dit is goedkoop *opgeleide arbeid*...¹³⁸

[Such girls are also readily taken up in the cities by Maternity hospitals (private), it is cheap *skilled labour*...]

Faced with such difficulties, was the ACVV able to employ the women - imbued with middle-class and nationalist ideals - so crucial to the success of their schemes? Some Afrikaans middle-class women certainly entered the nursing profession in the early 1930s, even if most rapidly exchanged careers for marriage.¹³⁹ But given that the ACVV's course was subsidised, and the relatively low salaries of midwives, most applicants were probably from struggling rural or small-town families. The ACVV executive stressed the need to screen candidates carefully, and local branches were encouraged to recommend 'verdienselike meisies' ['deserving girls']. Head office sometimes found itself at odds with branches' motives for recommending candidates. The former was primarily interested in educating white, Afrikaans midwives who could contribute to the social upliftment of poor whites; the latter saw the opportunity to help impoverished young women towards employment. Hence Rothmann's comment: 'as ons net ons vrouens kan kry om te besef dat hulle die geskiktheid van hulle kandidate in aanmerking moet neem bo hulle persoonlike behoefte aan werk...' ['if only we can get our women to realise that they must rate the suitability of their candidates above their personal need to work...']¹⁴⁰

Some working-class women who had the requisite schooling did surmount the final hurdle of the ACVV's scrutiny. 'Miss Booysen' who had been in 'huisdiens' ['domestic service'] for three years, saved £20 and then successfully applied to the ACVV for a loan to study nursing. A recommendation from the local minister's wife ensured the organisation's support for Johanna Coetzee, whose parents could not afford her fees.¹⁴¹ But 'Miss Las

138 CA, A1953, A1/1/1, M.E. Rothmann to J. Pellissier, 2 July 1935, original emphasis.

139 Shula Marks, *Divided Sisterhood: Race, Class and Gender in the South African Nursing Profession* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), pp.69-71. Marks writes that although nursing was a suitable feminine vocation in Afrikaner nationalist eyes, relatively few middle-class Afrikaner women chose independent nursing careers. Nursing only became a viable option for Afrikaner women when secondary education became free and compulsory, and remained a relatively unattractive option because training was predominantly in English and married women were barred from work in public hospitals until after the Second World War. 'It was only in the harsh 1930s that Afrikaner women began to enter the profession in any number...' Surveys of women training as general nurses suggest that while many were middle-class and probably English in 1931, a large number of trainees were from a rural background and Afrikaans by 1942.

140 CA, A1953, A1/1/1, M.E. Rothmann to J. Pellissier, 2 July 1935.

from Aberdeen' was refused admission to the midwifery course when the ACVV learned that she was an unsatisfactory worker and had a 'touch of the tarbrush'.¹⁴²

A number of nurses employed by the ACVV measured up to expectations. Some even helped found branches and organise appropriately 'uplifting' activities.¹⁴³ But the performance of others was disappointing. A northern branch closed its clinic because the nurse 'het baie sonde gegee' ['caused much trouble'].¹⁴⁴ A maternity care project in nearby Vryburg also foundered because of the nurse: '... sy het haar swak gedra, sodat dit baie opspraak verwek het in die dorp, en het nooit haar kant van die geldelike ooreenkoms volgehou nie' ['... she behaved badly, so that it provoked much sensation in the town, and never honoured her side of the monetary agreement'].¹⁴⁵ A Namaqualand branch advertised for a general nurse at £180 p.a. plus fees. The successful applicant was a midwife who increased the fees, lost patients, and angered the ACVV - 'haar hele optree onbevredigend, verkeerde houding' ['her whole manner unsatisfactory, wrong attitude'].¹⁴⁶ Problems stemmed partly from the ACVV's expectation that nurses should perform a 'national service' by providing care at low fees; nurses were at least as concerned with making a living.

Even reliable staff did not always share the organisation's ideals. This sometimes caused conflict between medical personnel and local ACVVs. A western Cape branch had sufficient power to make the doctor comply with its decision that nationalist convictions overrode medical concerns. In Swellendam, women could not bear illegitimate children in the clinic - single mothers could apparently not be *volksmoeders*. Rothmann told the story with some satisfaction. When the magistrate sent the 'gawe Afrikaanse doktertjie' ['pleasant little Afrikaans doctor'] to an unmarried woman, he wanted her to have the baby at the clinic. The ACVV refused:

Dit was die derde aansoek wat ons in hierdie eerste jaar kry vir 'n onegte kindjie; en die tak het 'n vaste reël gemaak. Ek stem saam daarmee, want die plekkie is vir die arm bywoner en kneg se vrou, en dit beteken vir hulle sommer regtig 'n opheffing.

141 CA, A1953, 2/3, 8, J. Coetzee to M.E. Rothmann, 8 Oct. 1937.

142 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (41), reply scribbled on letter from Rothmann to Anna Geyer, 25 April 1932.

143 CA, A1953, 2/9, 116, M.E. Rothmann to M. Laubscher, 3 Dec. 1936;

144 CA, A1953, A1/2/1 (Rothmann's diary as organising secretary), July 1928; CA, A1953, A1/1/1, A.E. Le Roux to M.E. Rothmann, 22 Oct. 1935.

145 CA, A1953, A1/2/3 (Rothmann's diary as organising secretary) undated entry.

146 CA, A1953, A1/2/1, 1928.

As ons nou die wilde swaels ook herberg, dan sal ons die goeie en verdienstelikes nie kry nie. Nou trap ons vas. Maar glo my, dokters en verpleegsters word sommer gou boos vir 'n ACVV en erg hulle gruwelik dat ons so iets te sê wil hê.¹⁴⁷

[This was the third application for an illegitimate child in this first year; and the branch took a firm decision. I agree, because the clinic is meant for the poor sharecropper and farmhand's wife, and it really offers them a chance for upliftment. If we also sheltered the wild swallows, we would not get the virtuous and deserving. So we are digging in our heels. But believe me, doctors and nurses get annoyed and extremely angry with us when we also want to have a say.]

Local attitudes also sometimes impeded the ACVV's maternity care projects. As Rothmann soon discovered, doctors who were faced with the potential loss of fee-paying patients were not always sympathetic to the idea that women needed specialised care:

Selfs die liewe Dr Weich, toe ek hom vanmore raadpleeg oor die geldelike kant van die Gesondheidskomitee, sê dit sal goed wees, maar hy sien tog so op teen die misbruik wat van die verpleegster se dienste gemaak sal word deur mense wat *kan* betaal. En *kan* ons nie maar laat staan nie, die vrouens kom daar deur en die een help die ander...¹⁴⁸

[Even the dear Dr Weich, when I asked his advice about the financial side of the health committee, said it would be all right, but what if people who *can* pay take advantage of the nurse's services. And couldn't we rather leave it, the women survive and the one helps the other...]

Women from rural villages and farms were still suspicious of modern medicine, and did not always receive the ACVV's plans to have their trusted midwives replaced by professional nurses with enthusiasm. 'Die mense is so verknog aan [ou vrouens]' ['The people are so attached to the old midwives'], Rothmann noted after addressing a meeting in Namaqualand on the need for improved maternity care:

Ek was by een, Tant' Ellie Cloete, wat in die dorp woon in 'n allereenvoudigste huisie, sy is ook 'n baie eenvoudige mens, lewendig en vol durf, maar pure onkunde. Ek sou sê sy moes al menig geval verkeerd laat loop het. Maar die mense het die grootste vertroue in haar: dit lyk my hulle koester 'n suspiesie dat ek haar wil ondermyn omdat ek in my vergadering gepraat het van die behoefte aan 'n verpleegster...¹⁴⁹

[I visited one of them, Aunt Ellie Cloete, who lives in town in a most primitive little house, she is also a very unsophisticated person, lively and spirited but ignorant. I would say that she has mismanaged numerous cases. But the people have the greatest trust in her: it seems that they suspect me of wanting to undermine her because I talked about the need for a nurse at the meeting...]

147 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11(99), M.E. Rothmann to A.Geyer, 5 Nov. 1941.

148 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.7, M.E. Rothmann to J.H. Conradie, 25 Oct. 1931.

149 CA, A1953, A1/2/1, Aug. 1928.

Rothmann was convinced that local participation was crucial for successful organisation.¹⁵⁰ But middle-class women's conviction that they could improve women's situation was not always shared by their poorer counterparts. If harsh experiences of childbirth among impoverished northern Cape women spurred Rothmann to action, their (and their menfolk's) apathy frustrated her:

Wat vir my nog die ergste is, is dat die vrouens meen dit moet maar so wees. 'Ag, miesies, wat sal 'n mens nou maak? Ons moet mos nou maar uithou, en op die Here se hulp vertrou.' - En as die vrouens so voel, hoef 'n mens nie te vra wat die mans sê nie.¹⁵¹

[For me the worst is that the women think things should be like this. 'Oh madam, what can one do? We must endure, and trust in the Lord's help.' - And if the women feel like this, one does not need to ask what the men say.]

That a number health committees were founded in isolated areas of the Cape proved that indifference and defeatism could to some extent be overcome. But the attitudes of *hoofbestuur* and local branches towards 'lay' midwives also illustrate the uneven penetration of the organisation's programme into the countryside. Poor women certainly patronised the ACVV's clinics in increasing numbers from the late 1920s.¹⁵² But ten years later isolated branches still struggled to break women's trust in 'lay' midwives. In a northern Cape town, the ACVV president faced dealing with an untrained midwife who belonged to the branch:

Sy sukkel met 'n vroedvrou, onopgelei, wat ook lid is van die tak. Sy werk nog steeds; het onlangs uitgevra omtrent opleiding. Die distrik het nog baie primitiewe beskouings van verpleging. Veral kraamwerk; en hierdie persoon kweek die beskouings aan. Gevolglik opdraand vir 'n opgeleide...¹⁵³

[She is struggling with a midwife, untrained, that is also a member of the branch. She is still working; has recently enquired about training. The district has very primitive notions of nursing. Especially maternity work, and this person encourages such perceptions. Therefore uphill work for a trained person...]

While the ACVV petitioned the state to extend its control over midwives with no formal training, it differentiated between those midwives who clung to old practices in 'pure ignorance' and others who had doctors' approval. After some efforts to raise funds for a 'small hospital' with trained staff, a northern branch settled for a maternity clinic where they employed an 'uitstekende' ['excellent'], although untrained nurse, also a member of the ACVV.¹⁵⁴ But head office's approval of this scheme was not too surprising. Unlike

150 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.7, M.E. Rothmann to J.H. Conradie, 25 Oct. 1931.

151 *Ibid.*

152 Rothmann, 'Gevaarlike Moederskap', p.24.

153 CA, A1953, A1/2/4 (Rothmann's diary as organising secretary), 1937.

other midwives with no formal training, she was not taught her skills by 'lay' midwives. 'Meer soortvan 'n professioneel' ['More sort of a professional'], she started to practise while still in her twenties and soon worked with medical men.¹⁵⁵ As her daughter recalled:

My ma was nooit geleer vir 'n verpleegster nie. Sy het maar die babetjies gevang, en naderhand was sy so kunstig dat die dokters vir haar - sy't onder dokters gewerk, en sy't selfs 'n ou klinietjie gehad waar sy die vrouens ingeneem het.¹⁵⁶

[My mother was never trained as a nurse. She just caught the babies, and after a while she was so skilled that the doctors - she worked under doctors, and she even had a little clinic where she took in the women.]

In Upington, where the ACVV employed no nurse until the 1940s, the ACVV still made use of 'lay' midwives. Magriet Abel's recollections show how the organisation's help meshed with more informal networks of mutual aid. The midwife

het altyd daar gewees met die babetjies en elke dag gegaan, die vrou weer versorg, en dan het die ACVV nou maar gegee en ook die bure. Ag daai dae het ons baie gehelp mekaar jy weet, jy't ook meer geweet die een van die ander se behoeftes want daar was, daar was mos nou meer onderlinge gemeenskap en kuier bymekaar en so. As die mevrou, ek wil nou nie haar naam noem nie, as sy nou 'n baba het, dan het Tant Lenie vir ons laat weet daar is weer 'n baba by Anna, dan het die een sop gestuur en daardie een...¹⁵⁷

[... was always there with the babies and went every day, again cared for the women, and then the ACVV gave, and also the neighbours. Oh those days we helped each other a lot, you know, you also knew more about each other's needs because there was, there was more mutuality and lots of visiting and so on. If the Mrs, I don't want to mention her name, if she had a baby, then Tant Lenie let us know there's a baby at Anna's again, then this one would send soup and that one...]

The midwife was also called when a struggling farmer's wife came to town to have her baby in the house of Aunt Lu (*see plate 25*), married to an attorney and the local ACVV president:

daar was 'n vrou gewees, hulle het so baie babetjies gehad, en hulle was nogal gesiene mense, hulle was nou, hulle was nou blanke arm mense, verstaan jy. Baie ordentlike familie, daar's nou nog van hulle hier rond. En sy het so baie babetjies gehad dan't sy altyd na Tant Lu toe - ek dink vir drie van haar babas het sy na Tant Lou toe gekom. En dan't sy maar daar gebly en sy't maar daar geëet, en Mevrou Davis het na haar toe gegaan, vir die bevalling nou...¹⁵⁸

[there was a woman, they had so many little babies, and they were rather respectable people, they were now, they were now white poor people, you understand. A very

154 CA, A1953, 2/3, 9, Rothmann to I. Theron, 25 March 1939; A1/2/1, Oct. 1928.

155 Interview with Abel.

156 interview with Nolte.

157 Interview with Abel.

158 *Ibid.*

decent family, there's still some of them left around here. And she had so many little babies, then she always went to Aunt Lu - I think she went to Aunt Lu for three of her babies. And then she'd just stay there, and she just ate there, and Mrs Davis went to her, that's for the birth...]

That black midwives should be replaced by white nurses was implicit in the ACVV's scheme. However, racist attitudes from local ACVVs were sometimes tempered by a more cautious approach from the executive. In 1935 a rural branch asked what legal steps it could take against black 'lay' midwives. Head office cautioned that the branch should not act against midwives simply because of their skin colour:

Nou wil ek u verder raai, en ernstig ook: Ek dink nie u moet die saak op kleurlyne behandel nie. 'n Verpleegster is opgelei of nie opgelei nie; bekwaam of onbekwaam. En weens gebrek aan opleiding of aan bekwaamheid of geskiktheid kan 'n mens wel deeglik optree; waar 'n onbekwame, ongeskikte, onsindelike wit vrou die doen sal ons mos net so optree, nie waar nie?¹⁵⁹

[Now I want to give you some serious advice: I don't think you should approach the matter along the lines of colour. A nurse is trained or untrained; competent or not. And in case of lack of training or capability one can take concerted action. Where an incompetent, unsuitable or unclean white woman does the work we would do the same, not so?]

Hoofbestuur agreed that in principle preference should be given to white nurses and suggested that 'coloureds' should be trained for work amongst 'hulle eie mense' ['their own people']. But in the absence of trained workers, it defended women's rejection of an 'incompetent white' in favour of a 'deeglike gekleurde' ['thorough coloured'] midwife as reasonable.¹⁶⁰

Conclusion

In the context of the Depression, philanthropy remained an important aspect of ACVV branch activity, and rural and urban ACVVs continued to draw white Afrikaans women into female support networks and church-centred community structures. Their work sometimes incorporated leadership's new ideas of 'scientifically correct' welfare work that encouraged self-sufficiency amongst recipients.

The organisation also continued to support cultural Afrikaner nationalism, although significant changes in emphasis and approach were apparent. From 1928, the *Nasionale Vroue Party* was unable to launch cultural campaigns, and the ACVV devoted much energy

¹⁵⁹ CA, A1953, A1/1/1, M.E. Rothmann to S.J. de Leeuw, 31 May 1935.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

to the promotion of Afrikaner nationalist print culture in the rural Cape through a *leeslus* project that focused on school libraries and encouraged reading amongst their membership. Spontaneous support for Afrikaans and popular history at branch level also declined with the rapid centralisation that accompanied the ascendancy of a Broederbond-directed FAK, and the ACVV's own strong emphasis on social welfare.

By the mid-1920s, the ACVV had already concluded that working-class Afrikaans speakers would not identify with Afrikaner culture unless they were extracted from 'racially' *deurmekaar* (mixed-up) suburbs. In 1930, Cape Town's ACVV took the initiative by establishing a racially exclusive boarding-house for female, Afrikaans factory workers. Here, affordable accommodation was combined with a programme for social upliftment and cultural moulding. Complimentary projects included cultural clubs for female factory workers, and a crèche that removed white Afrikaans children from the 'harmful' environment of 'mixed race' suburbs. By the end of the 1930s, *Tweede Trek* fervour gave these projects a strong Afrikaner nationalist slant.

The ACVV continued to extract those they deemed 'Afrikaners' from inner-city suburbs, but such efforts were now complimented by more ambitious projects. A strong partnership with the Citizen's Housing League and Utility Company led to the building of sub-economic housing for whites, and Afrikaans families could now be placed in a setting more conducive to a 'proper' race-consciousness.

But an overall change to lobbying for legislative solutions was also evident. ACVV women's efforts to promote racial segregation involved growing demands for state intervention; from the mid-1930s they advocated the legislative solution of separate residential areas. Leadership ensured that *platteland* branches also participated in this campaign. By the end of the decade, the ACVV's efforts to guard the morals of the *volk* also involved the politics of reproduction, imbued with Afrikaner nationalist concerns for racial purity. Their evidence in support of legislation against 'mixed marriages' took place in the context of vociferous campaigns around the issue by the Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party. ACVV leaders' efforts to prevent *skadelike volksvoorplanting* also led them to reevaluate their previous rejection of sex education and contraception. But they were most concerned about the phenomenon of 'moeilike meisies' whose amoral behaviour made them unsuitable mothers of the nation and required special measures for control. The ACVV's solution included not only specialised institutions for young women with overactive sexuality, but also enforced sterilisation.

But the ACVV's most extensive programme for healthy *volksvoortplanting* concerned another aspect of reproduction - Afrikaans, white women's experience of childbirth in the rural Cape. In this respect, the ACVV's work suggests new avenues of exploration for feminist historians.

Feminist studies of childbirth and its management have successfully challenged gender-blind histories of obstetrics. But accounts that focus on efforts by men to establish control over women cannot adequately explain the reasoning behind the ACVV's maternity care projects. The campaigns launched by Afrikaner women during the 1920s and 1930s show that medical men were not alone in attempting to redefine and supply women's reproductive needs. The ACVV's leaders certainly absorbed medical science's views of maternity care, but sought to mould women's experience of childbirth to their particular Afrikaner nationalist concerns. As reproducers of the *volk* (so female Afrikaner nationalists believed), women's productive needs merited attention. In Rothmann's eyes, efforts to reconstruct the poor 'Afrikaner' family should centre on *armmoeders*. Indeed, enabling women to be good mothers were so pivotal to combatting 'white' poverty that the provision of maternity care merited state funding. If some maternity care projects for rural 'poor whites' were primarily motivated by a conviction that white Afrikaans professionals should replace black 'lay' midwives, Rothmann project was more ambitious. Women's role as lynch-pins hinged on their educative function in the home; their excessive burden of work contributed to a cycle of poverty.

For years, leading women in the ACVV had recognised that they could best reach the poor through personal contact. While the ACVV conducted public campaigns, its main contribution to the construction of Afrikaner identity took place in the privacy of homes. Rothmann was likewise aware that *armmoeders* could best become *volksmoeders* in the intimate context of childbirth. The success of Rothmann's project depended on a change in the social relationship between parturient women and birth attendants. But here the crucial change was not that described in feminist accounts of the 'reproductive takeover': the establishment of male control over parturient women. In Rothmann's scenario, 'lay' midwives were replaced by women who had absorbed middle-class and nationalist notions of women's social role. In fact, female solidarity was to help build the cross-class, linguistically and racially exclusive 'imagined community' of Afrikaner nationalism.

The success of the ACVV's ambitious plans for rural nursing and maternity care was not only hampered by the shortage of trained nurses. Rothmann wanted *platteland* women to organise for their own rights but was sometimes met with apathy and resignation. Moreover, doctors did not always prioritise improving birth conditions for women. The organisation

also struggled to find nurses who shared their vision that rural maternity care work was a *landsdiens*, a situation not improved by low salary scales.

Even so, dealings with the Union Department of Health grew apace. The women secured state funds for their project and proceeded to set up a network of maternity care clinics throughout the rural Cape. Rothmann's ambitious rural nursing scheme was established in towns throughout the *platteland* by the late the 1930s, and had secured enough state support to ensure its survival. In fact, by the end of the decade ACVV leaders were beginning to discuss whether the work was not becoming too substantial for the organisation to handle on its own.¹⁶¹ The ACVV had certainly made their mark in the field of state subsidised maternity care available to the rural poor.

It was also with the establishment of health and maternity care projects that important changes in the functioning of local ACVV's occurred. Most rural branches had hitherto dealt with welfare work on their own and largely in the privacy of homes. Now ACVV members forged formal relationships with representatives from other local organisations, professionals and local government. *Platteland* Afrikaans women were therefore stepping more firmly into the public terrain of their local towns.

But such changes took place in spite of frustrating negotiations with another state department. As ACVVs on the *platteland* entered new relationships with other players involved in the provision of services to the poor during the 1930s, the organisation also encountered opposition from some quarters. In fact, Rothmann's efforts to influence state policy with regards to maternity care may only be fully understood once the ACVV's efforts to shape the government's social work policy has been examined. The final chapter of this thesis documents the ACVV's dealings with the Dutch Reformed Church and the Department of Labour and Social Work, and focuses on a theme already present in previous chapters: the 'gender dynamics' of Afrikaner nationalism as women tried to negotiate a role for themselves in social welfare.

161 CA, A1953, 2/29, 16, M.E. Rothmann to M. Luckhoff, 3 December [1939].

Chapter Six

Dealing with Church and State: Afrikaner Nationalism and Gender Conflict in the 1930s



Plate 26. The Federale Vroue Kongres, Bloemfontein, 1933. Representatives of the four Afrikaans women's welfare organisations participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Vrouemonument. Behind them is a voortrekker choir.

Chapter Six

Ons vrouens moet mekaar verstaan en bystaan; die band wat daar tussen ons almal bestaan behoort nie 'feminisme' te versterk nie, maar liever 'das Ewig Weibliche' wat die mensdom 'hinanzieht'.¹

[We women must understand and support each other; the bond that exists between us should not strengthen 'feminism', but rather 'the Eternal Womanliness' that draws humanity 'towards her'.]

In die ideale staat waarna ons streef sal vroueraad sekerlik van groot gewig wees in enige reëling van gesinne...²

[In the ideal state towards which we are striving, women's advice will certainly carry great weight in any work involving families...]

Introduction

By the late 1920s the ACVV was well established as a welfare organisation that targeted 'Afrikaners'. This independently established and administered organisation had also carved a niche for middle-class women intent on making a public contribution to the welfare of the *volk*. Like many women's organisations elsewhere in the world, ACVV leaders wielded a maternalist discourse that accepted women's separate calling, but claimed a range of *vrouesake* (women's issues) for women's public activities.

But what of other contenders in the field? After all, in histories of poor (white) relief in South Africa, the women's contribution come a poor third to that of church and state.³ If an

1 University of Stellenbosch Document Centre (hereafter USDC), M.E. Rothmann Collection (hereafter MER), 55.M.1.K.11 (19), M.E. Rothmann to Anna Geyer, 29 May 1930. Rothmann explains that she is drawing on Goethe's *Faust*: 'Alles vergangliche ist nur ein Gleichnis; /Das unzulangliche, hier wird's Ereignis/ Das unbeschreibliche, hier ist es getan;/Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan.' In Theodore Martin's translation, *Faust* (London: Dent, 1954), this final verse reads: 'All in earth's fleeting state/As symbol showeth;/Here, the inadequate/To fullness groweth,/Here is wrought the ineffable/Through heavenly love/The Ever-Womanly Draws us above'. I have translated the final line more directly.

2 Cape Archives (hereafter CA), Archives of the Dutch Reformed Church (hereafter DRC), V21 (ACVV collection), 1/1/5, M.E. Rothmann, *Onverantwoordelike Ouerskap* (Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, nd c.1933).

3 For an account of DRC poor (white) relief, see P.F. Greyling, *Die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk en Armesorg* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1939). J. Bottomley, 'Public Policy and White Rural Poverty in South Africa, 1881-1924' (Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, 1990) looks at state social welfare from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s. In 'The State Provision of Social Security: some Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Perspectives with reference to South Africa' (M.Comm. dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1990) Johannes J. Kruger includes a

increase in state measures for social welfare was already apparent during much of the period covered by previous chapters, the trend accelerated in the 1930s. In this chapter, the relationship between state, church and the ACVV by the end of the 1920s sets the scene for a narrative of their rapidly changing relationship. The story of conferences, meetings and behind-the-scene caucusing holds important implications for understanding 'women's place' in nationalism.

1. The Gender Dynamics of Afrikaner Nationalist Philanthropy: The ACVV's Relationship with Church and State by 1928

For much of the ACVV's existence, the 'poor white question' had been a focal point for Afrikaner nationalist politicians who depended on votes from a growing and disaffected number of economically marginalised whites. Political mobilisers had turned the 'poor white question' into the central issue that would determine the survival of the Afrikaner nation. From the mid-1910s, the Nationalists in particular campaigned around the *achteruitgang* (decline) of Afrikaners relative to blacks and English-speakers.⁴ Moreover, the National Party envisaged a larger role for the state in finding a solution. In the 1910s, whites already benefited from education policies and a racially biased railways employment policy. When the Pact government took power in 1924, the NP's pledge to work for a state responsible for 'the spiritual, national and material welfare of the people'⁵ was translated into labour legislation that privileged white workers. Indeed, the 1924 election was won not only by Hertzog's pledge of strong state action to transform agriculture, but also by his promises to better the South African Party's evident failure to provide for a growing mass of unemployed whites.⁶

short history of poor relief in his analysis of racial bias in state social welfare expenditure. See also John Iliffe's *The African Poor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), for a discussion of the creation of a state welfare system for whites in the general context of 'multiracial' poverty in South Africa.

4 Bottomley, 'Public Policy and White Rural Poverty in South Africa', pp.250-1.

5 *Ibid.*, p.244.

6 D. O' Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 to 1948* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1983), p.24; Bottomley, 'Public Policy and White Rural Poverty in South Africa', p.238. A key issue in the election was the Labour/Nationalist Party coalition's promise to implement racial legislation in support of white workers. Bottomley argues that the SAP had 'rejected most forms of racial prescription for the South African economy', preferring to avoid interventionist measures but 'rather to leave the solution of the country's problems to economic forces and the future'.

What was the ACVV's relationship with state bureaucracy some four years after the Pact government came into power? Between 1924 and 1929, the alliance between the Labour and Nationalist parties produced vigorous policies of agricultural subsidisation (albeit of dubious help for the rural poor) and the protection of employment for white workers.⁷ The government's response to white impoverishment in the countryside comprised mainly temporary roads, railways and employment schemes and food hand-outs. By 1928, the ACVV's interaction with state bureaucracy did not stretch far beyond the subsidies their *huishoudskole* received. The philanthropic work done at branch level - visiting the poor to determine their needs - was mostly done by volunteers and entirely funded by the ACVV itself. Even the growing field of state-funded schemes to combat child mortality did not at first significantly benefit ACVV programmes.⁸

Some thirteen years after the DRC's *Algemene Armesorg Kommissie* (Poor Relief Commission)⁹ was founded in 1915, the DRC's orphanages, school hostels and other charitable institutions still comprised the bulk of its work with the poor of the *volk*. *Armesorg* helped to subsidise poor congregations and raised funds for drought relief in the north-western Cape. The church also administered a settlement for poor whites at Kakamas in the northern Cape. But at the parish level, church councils did little more than provide small allowances to elderly and impoverished DRC members. From 1928 the introduction of old age pensions (for 'coloureds' and 'whites') also reduced the need for *aalmoese* (alms) from the church.

The ACVV had remained independent of church structures - occasional requests that it should submit to the synod's authority were met with polite refusals.¹⁰ Branch minutes

7 O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, p.33.

8 See Chapter Four, p.232

9 This commission was first called 'Inwendige Sending' ['Internal Mission']. In the 1930s, provincial DRCs had 'Algemene Armesorg Kommissies' ['General Poor Relief Committees']. The ACVV often dealt specifically with the Cape *Armesorg*, but the provincial commissions worked closely together and the church also acted through a federal *Armesorg* council. The official name was *Armesorg*, but an alternative spelling, *Armsorg*, was often used by ACVV members. I have kept to the first spelling in translations.

10 The DRC requested the ACVV to relinquish its independent status in 1922. In 1924, the church somewhat ambivalently declared that it recognised the independence of the ACVV - whilst still trying to gain some control over its funds. The synod thanked the women for their work and declared that the church had no claim to money collected by the ACVV. However, it also suggested

sometimes reflected the women's perception that the church did not sufficiently acknowledge the ACVV's work, and even friction between ACVVs and church committees. In 1921, Cradock wanted Congress to discuss setting up a meeting with *Armesorg* and the *Helpmekaar Beweging* (Help one another Movement) in order to discuss how 'wriewing en verspilling van kragte' ['friction and wasted effort'] could be avoided. The branch also tabled a resolution asking 'ons kerk om haar steun en Sympathie in ons werk vir volk, Taal en Kerk' ['our church for her support and Sympathy for our work for people, Language and Church'].¹¹ Reports from branches sometimes reflected members' efforts to demonstrate close identification with the church in the face of some resentment. In 1924, Riebeeck-Oos expressed bewilderment at some local ill-feeling towards the ACVV:

Die ACVV word deur die Kerkraad hoog gewaardeer, en eersgenoemde is seker een van die sterkste steunpilare van die Kerk. Hier is geen onafhanklikheidsgevoel by die Vereniging nie en ons kan nie verstaan hoedat daar sommige is wat die ACVV beskou as 'n soort van gemeente in die gemeente nie.¹²

[The ACVV is much appreciated by the Church Council, and is certainly one of the mainstays of the Church. The ACVV does not have an independent spirit and we cannot understand why some regard the ACVV as a sort of congregation within the congregation.]

But although branches also maintained separate structures at the parish level, local Dutch Reformed churches depended heavily on ACVV women to help needy parishioners - and sometimes also to boost the coffers of the church.

By 1928, ACVV leaders apparently regarded the church with somewhat jaundiced eyes. They were unhappy with some branches' contributions to local church funds and donations to the DRC's poorer congregations. Rothmann's wry reprimand to her colleagues in *hoofbestuur* for gossiping about the ministers showed ACVV leaders' ambivalence about the DRC:

Ek word darem naas as jy en Ida so boos word vir die predikante; veral in die dorpe is ons die goed darem so baie skuldig: ek sien dit opnuut hier. Aan die ander kant word ek self so moeilik vir hulle, dan dink ek, ag laat Anna en Ida maar uitpak, so onder ons, dis miskien gesonder as opkrop...¹³

[I'm saddened when you and Ida become so angry with the ministers; we do owe the creatures a lot especially in the villages: I see this confirmed again here. On the other

that local branches should 'consult and obtain permission from the local church council' when collecting funds. Once again, the ACVV rejected any measure of financial accountability to the DRC. (H.C. Lambrechts, 'Die Eerste Vyftig Jaar: die Ontwikkeling van die Werk van die Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1957) p.196.)

11 Cradock Branch minutes, 3 Dec. 1921 (original emphasis and capital letters).

12 *Die Huisgenoot*, 22 Feb. 1924, p.29.

13 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (4), Rothmann to Anna Geyer c.1928. Rothmann was traveling in the rural Cape, but the letter does not indicate which town she was visiting.

hand when they also provoke me I think, oh well, perhaps it's healthier for Anna and Ida to express their feelings in private rather than bottle them up...]

For Theron - executive member from Tulbagh in the western Cape - her church's assumption of ACVV help was a source of irritation. 'Ons doen te veel die kerk se werk. Die predikante kry te veel uit ons vrouens uit' ['We do too much of the church's work. The ministers get too much out of us women'], she wrote to Anna Geyer. As she explained, the local minister 'het die vrouens hier feitlik gedreig en gebully' ['practically threatened and bullied the women here'] to contribute towards building a new church. He had also asked them to help pay for a booklet published 'uit pure spoggerigheid.... Daar het die vrouens darem gelukkig vasgetrap' ['from pure vanity.... Fortunately the women stood firm']. If rural branches often worked closely with *kerkraad* and *predikant*, the latter did not necessarily consult the women:

Wat 'n mens jou die meeste oor erg is dat die predikant en sy Kerkraad hierdie besluite maak, die vrouens word feitlik nooit in ag geneem of geraadpleeg nie en dan by die betaal-slag kom hulle so ewe ons deel eis.¹⁴

[The most vexing aspect is that the minister and his church council hardly ever consider or consult the women when making these decisions, and then when it comes to paying up they come and demand our contribution.]

It was probably not coincidental that complaints about grasping ministers came at a time when the ACVV was formulating new ideas about social work and beginning to co-ordinate rural projects to a far greater extent than previously. It was in 1928 that Rothmann began her travels as 'organising secretary', and that *Eendrag* (Unity) was launched. Indeed, new projects now being developed by the ACVV were part of a broader shift from philanthropy ('liefdadigheid') and poor relief to social work ('maatskaplike werk'). This would also be the context for an increasingly complex interaction between the Afrikaans women's organisations, government departments and the Dutch Reformed Church.

2. 'Mede-arbeidsters van Staat en Kerk'? ('Co-workers of State and Church') ACVV women in the Era of State Welfare Provision

As the first five years of Pact rule drew to an end, ACVV leaders were articulating a need to re-evaluate old policies. In fact, as economic depression made the 'poor white question'

¹⁴ USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.19 (2), 14 April [1929]. Similar complaints were levelled at the National Party, which - according to Rothmann in *Die Burger* (26 Feb. 1927) - demanded money raised by Women's National Party branches without enquiring of the women how *they* wanted to use the funds.

reach crisis proportions, Afrikaner nationalists were changing their approach to this matter. The broad outlines of these shifts are well documented. From the late 1920s in particular, increasing numbers of Afrikaans academics promoted the 'scientific' study of 'white poverty' - this culminated in the Carnegie-funded research project launched in 1929 and published three years later. Participants promoted a professionally administered and state subsidised solution to the 'poor white question'. In 1934, a *volkskongres* (people's congress) convened by the DRC also proposed high levels of state involvement in dealing with white poverty. Committees of Action (*Voortsettingskomitees*) lobbied the state, and in 1937 a separate Department of Social Welfare was founded. The problem of increasing impoverishment amongst Afrikaans whites was considered too urgent to be left to voluntary organisations. Politicians' awareness of the potential power of a rapidly growing white working class, and the need to fashion its members into nationalist supporters, certainly strengthened this conviction.¹⁵

What role did the Afrikaans women's organisations - and the ACVV in particular - play in these events? The very few South African histories of state social welfare programmes hardly mention women. Gender is also not a category of analysis in accounts of how welfare policies came about. In contrast, a wealth of recent research explores women's social movements and the origins of welfare states in the United States, western Europe and elsewhere. Feminist historians have 'uncovered the deep and intricate connections' between 'welfare-state history and women's history.... Women's reform efforts and welfare states not only coincided in time, place, and sometimes personnel but also reinforced and

15 The increased focus on poor whites took place in the context of escalating political conflict amongst Afrikaner nationalists. It was certainly one of the issues used to criticise the Fusion government after 1934, when a Hertzog-led National Party formed the United Party together with the South African Party, and his colleague D.F. Malan's break-away faction formed the *Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party* (Purified National Party). In '"Our Poor": the Politicisation of the Poor White Problem, 1932-1942' (*Kleio* 24 (1992)), J. Tayler argues that while white poverty increased in the first years of the decade, few whites remained unemployed by the end of the 1930s. Nationalist 'appropriation and politicisation' of the 'poor white question ... escalated at the very time that the problem was receding'. But her argument is based on official employment statistics. These are not an adequate indicator of poverty, nor can they measure a 'problem' in large part articulated by middle-class Afrikaner nationalists who feared that poor Afrikaans speakers did not identify with the (white) *volk*. Tayler's argument that poor whiteism was only 'politicised' after the Carnegie commission is also based on a narrowly party-political definition that ignores the involvement of Afrikaner academics, church and women's organisations in this event. But see the study of P. le Roux, 'Poor Whites', prepared for the *Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa*, 1984 (Paper no 284, Vol 32). He argues that an important motivation for designing social welfare programmes targeting poor whites was their potential political power as eligible voters. Propaganda around this issue and the provision of increased social welfare for whites was directly related to efforts to win support from the rapidly growing Afrikaans white working class.

transformed one another in significant and enduring ways'.¹⁶ Women's organisations were especially active in the field of maternal and child welfare:

(w)hen viewed from the perspective of maternalist politics, women's charitable institutions and organizations take on new significance ... as sites of state welfare program and policy formulation, experimentation and implementation.¹⁷

The cumulative studies of feminist scholars demonstrate the protean nature of 'maternalism': constructions of motherhood and the family varied with time, place and political intent. Feminist scholars also ask why women's movements in some countries substantially shaped state social welfare policy, while others hardly made an impact.¹⁸ During the 1920s, Afrikaans women in the ACVV and *Nasionale Vroue Party* had refined and adapted a maternalist discourse that supported their public, political activities. How did they respond to the changing environment of the 1930s - and did they play any part in the making of state welfare policy?

ACVV leadership was of course directly involved in the 'academic' study of poor whites. In 1928, Rothmann accepted a full-time position as the ACVV's organising secretary. But she soon combined her travels for the ACVV with fieldwork for the Carnegie enquiry - her particular focus was women in poor white families. A new era of academic and professional expertise was dawning, and Rothmann was participating in a 'scientific' study of the poor white question. ACVV leadership was also receptive to arguments that university-trained personnel should direct the 'family welfare' work that had hitherto been the territory of volunteers (albeit sometimes assisted by full-time workers with no formal training). Soon

16 Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, 'Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920', *American Historical Review* 95, 4 (1990), p.1076.

17 Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, 'Introduction: "Mother Worlds"', in S. Koven and S. Michel (eds), *Mothers of a New World* (New York: Routledge 1993), p.30. The essays in this book offer an interesting comparative perspective on the development of welfare states in the United States, Britain, northern Europe and Scandinavia. In *Women, the State and Welfare* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), editor Linda Gordon surveys recent feminist literature on the origins of the welfare state, as well as feminist critiques and analyses of contemporary welfare legislation in the United States. See also Kathleen D. McCarthy (ed.), *Lady Bountiful Revisited* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Motherwork: Women, Child Welfare and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994) and Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The political origins of social policy in the United States* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1992).

18 See Koven and Michel, 'Introduction: "Mother Worlds"', and their article 'Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920'. See also the review article by Alice Kessler-Harris, 'Women and Welfare: Public Interventions in Private Lives', in *Radical History Review* 56 (1993).

after the conclusion of fieldwork research, H.F. Verwoerd was also forging a working relationship with the ACVV. This future prime minister became head of the newly established (and first South African) Sociology Department at the University of Stellenbosch.¹⁹ Intent upon establishing the first training course for social workers in the country, he identified the ACVV as a useful partner in this venture.²⁰ Verwoerd and colleague Erika Theron founded a school of social work in 1932. Trainees were sent to the ACVV for field-work experience.²¹

But Rothmann had honed her skills in a women's organisation run by volunteers and self-taught social workers. Women's wisdom was essential to the success of 'family welfare' or *gesinswerk*, she argued. In 1930 she worried that the DRC's new plans to deal with poverty ignored professional - and women's advice:

Dit lyk my ook dwaas om nou, nou dat 'n klomp deskundiges hard aan werk is om lig te werp op die raaisel, te gaan planne maak wat miskien verkeerd sal wees.

Om die waarheid te sê toe ek in Woensdag se koerant die Kerk se suggesties lees, dag ek by myself: julle maak al weer planne vir huisgesinne sonder vroueraad! Ek dink darem die Kerk ... sal [nie] die vroueraad heeltemal uitlaat nie - weet ook nie!²²

[It seems foolish to go ahead with making plans that may be wrong while a lot of experts are working hard to throw light on the matter. In fact when I read the Church's suggestions in Wednesday's newspaper, I thought to myself: once again

19 R.B. Miller provides an interesting account of Verwoerd's work at this time in 'Science and Society in the Early Career of H.F. Verwoerd', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 4 (1993). She criticises a tendency amongst historians to 'search for the roots of his later policies', thus ignoring the fact that until 1936, Verwoerd's work did not manifest a penchant for 'social engineering' or ethnic nationalism. In this period (and like other Afrikaans academics at Stellenbosch), his academic approach was strongly influenced by American social science. Verwoerd promoted an empiricist approach that emphasised 'the methodology of social surveys or investigations that could be used to provide information for social policy and, fittingly, gave heavy emphasis to practical experience in social work and social investigation'. Instead of prescribing economic policy changes, he 'focused his attention on the nature of the individual's response to economic change and the need for individual uplift or *opheffing*'. Within this framework, 'scientifically trained' social workers had an important part in the battle against poor whiteism. While Verwoerd forged a close relationship with the ACVV, he also worked with English welfare organisations and Miller argues that he actively promoted co-operation between English and Afrikaans groupings in social welfare (pp. 644-655.)

20 CA, DRC, V21, 1/5 (ACVV executive minutes) 21 Feb. 1933.

21 A diploma for social workers was established in 1932. For an account of the history of social work training, see also U.G. 13/1950, *Die Verslag van die Departementele Komitee van Ondersoek oor die Opleiding en Indiensneming van Maatskaplike Werkers*, pp.1-8.

22 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (21), 18 July 1930, Rothmann to Anna Geyer.

you're making plans for families without women's advice! I do think the Church ... will not ignore women's advice altogether - then again I don't know!]

Of course the 'experts' had for once included a woman who proceeded to combine her maternalist convictions and interest in (white) women's experience of poverty with the latest sociological research methodology. But even before the publication of *Mother and Daughter in the Poor Family*, Rothmann was also involved in a new initiative by the four Afrikaans women's welfare organisations. In 1930 the ACVV and SAVF first suggested a joint congress under the auspices of the *Federale Vroue Raad* (Federal Women's Council).²³ An FVR meeting held the following year hinted at motivations for the congress. When Rothmann argued for its postponement to 1933, others emphasised that the conference was urgently needed for 'die status van die werk van die vier vroueverenigings' ['the status of the work of the four women's organisations'].²⁴ Ideas for the congress programme soon crystallised - with the ACVV and particularly Rothmann taking a leading role. Her suggestions included the organisation of rural nursing and 'konstruktiewe liefdadigheid' ['constructive philanthropy']. But her colleagues' concerns were most clearly related to an additional topic mooted for discussion: the respective roles of the state, church and women's organisations in social welfare:

'n Uniedepartement van Maatskaplike werk

- a) die deel van die Regering
- b) die deel van die kerke
- c) die deel van die Verenigings
- d) Die deel van die opleiding matrones en sosiale werksters²⁵

[a Union department of Social Work

- a) The role of the Government
- b) the role of the churches
- c) the role of the Organisations
- d) the role of training matrons and social workers.]

As Rothmann explained in an issue of the ACVV's *Eendrag*, women's organisations, the state and the church could combine powerfully to combat poverty amongst Afrikaners. Of this threesome, the women should speak with authority on the 'domestic' aspects of this issue:

Die bestryding van volksagteruitgang vra die gesamentlike kragte van Staat, Kerk en Vroueverenigings, ... ons moet nooit vergeet nie dat geen van hierdie drie magtige vennote in maatskaplike werk met so 'n gesag oor die huislike kant daarvan kan optree nie as die Vroueverenigings...²⁶

²³ ICH (Institute for Contemporary History), PV229, 1/2/2/2/1 (FVR minutes), 8 Dec. 1930; ICH, PV229, 1/1/1/1, 18 Dec. 1930.

²⁴ ICH, PV229, 1/2/2/2/1, 9 April 1931.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 Dec. 1932.

²⁶ *Eendrag*, 'Verslag van die organiserende sekretaresse', Nov. 1932, p.4.

[The struggle against the people's degeneration demands the joint powers of State, Church and Women's organisations, ... we must never forget that of these three powerful allies in social work, none can act as authoritatively on the domestic aspect as Women's organisations...]

The conviction that women's voices could, and should, be heard was surely related to white women's new enfranchised status. As the ACVV executive had explained to its members in 1930 (just before voting rights were extended to white women),

Vrouestemreg gee die ACVV - al staan hy ook buite die politiek - 'n gewig wat hy nog nooit gevore gehad het nie ... Die regering het met stemgeregtigde kiesers te doen en is deeglik daarvan bewus.²⁷

[Women's suffrage gives the ACVV - even though it stands outside politics - a weight that it has never before had The government deals with an electorate with the right to vote, and is thoroughly aware of this.]

In terms of its new plans, the ACVV leaders envisaged a partnership with men. Rothmann wrote to Anna Geyer about how much more one could do for the well-being of the *volk* through social work than politics, and added:

Dit is mos jou ou idee van die werk van die vrouens.... Maar dit moet nie die vrouens alleen wees nie. Hierdie laaste reis ... het my so gewys die onmoontlike van afgeronde werk tensy mans en vrouens dit saam doen. Ons is maar geneig om die ekonomiese, die manskant, oor die kop te sien; die mans weer sien onse kant, die huislike, glad nie raak nie.²⁸

[It's your old idea about the work of the women.... But it shouldn't be only the women. This latest journey ... has so proved to me the impossibility of thorough work unless men and women do it together. We do tend to neglect the economic, the men's side; the men on the other hand are completely blind to our, domestic, side.]

The *Federale Vroue Kongres* (Federal Women's Congress) opened in Bloemfontein on 1 July 1933 to front page coverage in the Afrikaans press. Speaking at the congress opening, the Minister of Health praised Afrikaans women for once again acting as the conscience of the *volk*:

Die Afrikaanse vrou is nou eenmaal goddank, so gemaak ... wanneer gevaar ons volk bedreig, dan lui die klok [in die harte] van die Afrikaanse vrou en die vroue vergader om te help red, en wie slap geword het tot nuwe moed en daadkrag aan te spoor.²⁹

[The Afrikaans woman has, thank God, been made like this ... when danger threatens our people, then the warning bell rings in their hearts and the women gather to help rescue, and to urge those who are despondent to new courage and action.]

²⁷ *Ibid.*, July 1930, pp.3-4.

²⁸ USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (47), Rothmann to Anna Geyer, 5 April 1933. In 1933, the Department of Forestry asked Rothmann to participate in a study of forestry settlements in Knysna.

²⁹ *Die Burger*, 5 July 1933.

The women themselves used the congress to publicise the urgency of the *arm blanke vraagstuk* (poor white question), but also to discuss the reorganisation of their work according to newly current ideas of socially responsible and scientifically correct welfare work. *Die Burger*'s reporter remarked how fear of 'verkeerde liefdadigheid' ['misplaced philanthropy'] that diminished the receivers' self-respect and self-reliance permeated discussions.³⁰ And as Rothmann commented, 'die verenigde kreet [was] "(o)ns wil nie meer so op losvoet werk nie, ons verlang na 'n wetenskaplike organisasie'" ['the collective slogan was "we no longer want to work piece-meal, we want a scientific organisation"'].³¹ Wide-ranging papers (covered in detailed press reports) included proposals for the co-ordination of rural health services, the educative aspects of 'constructive philanthropy' and 'gesonde' ['healthy'] housing. One speaker discussed the influence of unemployment on family life; Rothmann contributed an argument that fathers who shirked parental responsibility should be brought to book through forced labour. Verwoerd explained plans for professionally trained social workers and (hostel) matrons.

In contrast to previous practice, the women's proposals included not only a high degree of liaison with state departments, but also advocated an interventionist approach from the state that involved substantial financial support and the co-ordination of social welfare programmes. A congress resolution sent to the ministers of Social Welfare and Education praised the government for its apparent intention to act on issues of social welfare and to forge a policy for social work. But the FVR affiliates also envisaged a central role for themselves, as was clear from ACVV President Minni Roome's opening speech:

Die vier vroue verenigings [wil] by die gesamentlike kongres as mede-arbeidsters van staat en kerk optree, [wil] besluite neem en hulle tot die bevoegde owerhede wend om wantoestande te verbeter. Die gesamentlike kongres wil die Regering bedien met praktiese planne in verband met gesondheidswerk, veral op die platteland, konstruktiewe liefdadigheid en maatskaplike werk.³²

[The four women's organisations want to act as the co-workers of state and church at this joint congress, want to take decisions and turn to the appropriate authorities in order to improve on bad conditions. The joint congress wants to submit to the Government practical plans for health work, especially in the countryside, constructive philanthropy and social work.]

As the resolution to the ministers also explained, '(a)s praktiese werkers met kennis van armoedstoestande' ['as practical workers with knowledge of poverty conditions'] FVR representatives were now presenting their own ideas for tackling social welfare problems.³³

30 *Ibid.*, 6 July 1933.

31 *Ibid.*, 'Indrukke van 'n vroue-parlement', 11 July 1933.

32 *Ibid.*, 5 July 1933.

Speakers proposed detailed schemes for social work in the city, in rural areas and on diggings. But the crux of the congress was to launch a concerted effort to influence state policy on social welfare. The organisers saw to it that high-ranking state and church officials attended. As Rothmann had confirmed before the proceedings, 'Ons sal by die Kongres hê die manne wat, soos ek dink, die regering se oor het...' ['we'll have men who I believe have the government's ear at the congress...']³⁴

In fact, at the heart of the women's newly formulated policies was their conviction that women's knowledge was essential to 'scientifically' correct social welfare. Central to the women's arguments was the need to forge an integrated approach to three basic aspects of social work - these they identified as 'educational', 'medical' and 'economic'. ACVV leaders argued against official policy that treated the problem of white poverty primarily as an issue of unemployment - these women also accepted that employment policies focused on men. Hence their conviction that the Department of Labour should not house Social Welfare. Moreover, in the women's eyes, an emphasis on rehabilitation and education involved the primarily female territory of children and families, and therefore made the FVR affiliates essential partners in any programme to combat poverty.

The women immediately proceeded to lobby government. Their largely rural base made state acceptance of their plans for the reorganisation of social welfare on the *platteland* especially urgent. The FVR's submission to the Provincial Finances Commission in September 1933 explained that a co-ordinated social work programme was needed in the face of hitherto failed efforts at 'rural social reformation' and worsening conditions on the *platteland*:

the combined efforts of [existing] organisations are necessary, and that besides their co-ordination the co-operation, support of the Government is also indispensable for efficiently combatting such disruptive influences as ignorance, bad housing, unhygienic living, etc.³⁵

The FVR proposed a detailed scheme for social and health work in rural areas through the creation of 'maatskaplike Rade' ['social welfare Councils'] in every electoral division. As might be expected, the scheme was aimed specifically at poor whites. State officials from all tiers of government would participate. A council would include representatives of the Union Government - a magistrate and district surgeon. Provincial government officials would include an inspector of schools and local teachers. Municipalities and divisional

33 ICH, PV229, 2/11/1/2/1, Rothmann to J. Pellissier, 8 May 1933.

34 *Ibid.*

35 CA, A1953, 2/3, (file) 9, 'A Suggestion for the Organisation of Social and Health work in Rural Local Councils', 1933.

councils were also to have representation. Other suggested members were officials from the local churches. Of course, the FVR affiliates also outlined their own role: they suggested the participation of local welfare organisations and that 'at least one fourth of the total of members [should] be women, because so much of the work, viz., in homes and in nursing, is better guided by women.'³⁶ As Pellissier (from the Free State's *Oranje Vroue Vereniging* and chair of the FVR) explained when presenting the programme, 'die Regering moet meer gebruik van vroueverenigings maak...' ['the Government must make more use of the women's organisations...']³⁷ A state-appointed (but locally recommended) official would also head the commission. The FVR 'strongly' advised 'the appointment of a woman for this post'.³⁸

Whereas the salaries of this 'investigation officer' and nurses would be paid by the central state, further expenditure would be managed by the provincial government, local authorities and voluntary bodies involved. The main functions of the council would be to survey, investigate and research local social welfare conditions and to direct participating bodies towards the solution of any problems. Most crucial was its role in the co-ordination of all local social welfare work whilst maintaining a close link with provincial and union state departments. The council would deal with unemployment, district nursing, school feeding and medical programmes. It would also combat 'onbelesenheid' ['lack of reading'] and housing problems.

Even before the ACVV submitted its plans to state departments, another public campaign was already in the air. Only days after the conclusion of the FVR congress, *Die Burger* launched a vigorous campaign on the *armblanke probleem*. Editor Albertus Geyer pointed to the absence of a 'nasionale program' ['national programme'] and the lack of co-ordination between voluntary organisations, church and state. He urged the DRC - organiser of two

³⁶ *Ibid.* Slightly different versions of the proposal were submitted to various state officials. This particular submission was most explicit on the role of women. Compare an earlier submission to the Commissioner of Social Welfare (ICH, PV229, 6/1/1/1, 'Skema vir ko-ordinering van maatskaplike werk deur plaaslike rade'). This referred more obliquely to the Afrikaans women's organisations by explaining that local conditions and the relative strength of participating organisations should help determine the proportional representation of the five groups.

³⁷ *Die Volksblad*, 26 Sept. 1933.

³⁸ ICH, PV229, 6/1/2/1, 'A suggestion for the organisation of social and health work in rural local councils'.

previous *volkskongresse* about poor whites - to address this problem by convening another congress.³⁹

But instead of the largely church-based events of 1916 and 1923, Geyer envisaged a more inclusive and ambitious campaign in which Afrikaans women would play an important part. As Geyer explained, a new *volkskongres* would have more impact than previously because 'die Afrikaanse vroue verenigings het 'n krag geword wat van onskatbare waarde is by die gesamentlike aanpak van die vraagstuk' ['the Afrikaans women's organisations have become a power of incalculable value for a collective campaign on this question']. Moreover, the Carnegie report now provided thorough research and analysis on the poor white question. So far only the Afrikaans women's organisations were taking the issue further - their congress demonstrated the extent to which they already embraced the principles advocated by the Carnegie commission:

Dit is volkome duidelik dat in enige weldeurdragte veldtog ter oplossing van die arm blanke vraagstuk, sowel wat die opstel en uitvoering daarvan betref, daardie Afrikaanse Vroue verenigings 'n vername rol sal moet speel. Om sonder die vroue dit aan te pak, sou dwaas wees. Om dit egter net aan die vroue oor te laat, sou pligsversuim wees. Dit is die taak van die hele volk.⁴⁰

[It is absolutely clear that in any well considered campaign for solving the poor white question, as regards both its planning and execution, the Afrikaans women's organisations will have to play an important role. To tackle this without the women would be foolish. To simply leave it to the women would be neglecting one's duty. This is a task for the whole *volk*.]

As Rothmann wrote to Anna, Albertus Geyer's wife, 'as ek dit reg begryp dan wil [Albertus] hê die vrouens se optree moet deur die volk beklank word. Daarvoor voel ek van harte...' ['if I understand him correctly, Albertus wants the women's action to be taken further by the *volk*. With that I wholeheartedly agree...'] Although loath to commit herself so soon after an exhausting congress, Rothmann considered the possibility of a 'manskongres' with ACVV advisors: '(e)n laat die mans ons besluite en planne as uitgangspunt laat dien, en dan aanvul...' ['(t)hen the men could use our decisions and plans

39 In his official history of the *Broederbond*, *Die Afrikaner Broederbond: Eerste 50 Jaar* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1979), A.N.P. Pelzer claimed that this secret organisation was behind the *volkskongres* of 1934. Geyer was certainly a *Broederbond* member; so were other speakers and organisers, including D.F. Malan and H.F. Verwoerd (the latter was initially included as a substitute for Grosskopf, who was overseas at the time). *Broederbonders* may well have strategised around the *volkskongres*, as Tayler claims in '"Our Poor": the Politicisation of the Poor White Problem'. However, to infer a coherent strategy on the part of the organisation itself is problematic. During early 1930s - in the context of severe party-political differences and fast developing ideological splits within nationalist ranks - the *Broederbond* reflected divergent interests.

40 *Die Burger*, 12 July 1933.

as points of departure, and add to them...'] In fact, Rothmann was allowing herself heavenly visions of a new era of partnership with government with *vroueraad* (women's advice) being taken seriously:

Ek dink darem met hierdie nuwe optree van die vrouens, en die saamwerk met die Regering wat voorlê sal ons later dit as vanself aanneem dat die knap vrouens die leiding gee, en nie noodwendig die dominees nie. Ja, daar is 'n weergeboorte gekom! Ek het dit op Bloemfontein al te duidelik gevoel. Met dankbaarheid; as ek nou opsy stap, kan u diensmaag gaan in vrede, want myn oogen hebben uwe Zaligheid gesien!⁴¹

[I do think that with this new action of the women, and the co-operation with the Government that lies ahead we will later take it for granted that capable women take the lead, and not necessarily the [DRC] ministers. Yes, a rebirth is imminent! I felt it so clearly in Bloemfontein. With gratitude; were I now to step aside, then thy servant could go in peace, because my eyes have seen the Joys of Heaven!]

The women's organisations achieved a significant presence in the proceedings of the *volkskongres*, and FVR representatives served on committees dealing with a variety of welfare issues.⁴² Their participation remained motivated by a conviction that the FVR congress should provide the guidelines. As Rothmann explained, 'ons moet onthou die Bloemfontein kongres was feitelik die eerste stap' ['we must remember the Bloemfontein congress was in fact the first step']. The *volkskongres* had to further the ACVV's plans for organising social welfare and health work. '(O)ns het hierdie idee gevat op Bloemfontein.... Ons moet daaraan vashou so hard as ons kan' ['We took up this idea at Bloemfontein.... We must keep hold of it as best we can'].⁴³ An ACVV worker remembered this as 'die vroue se piekniek' ['the women's picnic']⁴⁴ - a range of proposals first mooted by the FVR in 1933 was indeed promoted by the *volkskongres*. These included the ACVV-motivated programme for the rural organisation of social welfare, plans for state-subsidised social workers and nurses, and demands for a centrally administered department of social welfare.

The *Voortsettingskomitee* delegated with taking further congress decisions also had a strong contingent from the women's organisations - OVV and SAVF members served alongside Anna Geyer, Zerilda Steyn and Rothmann. Together with colleague Erika Theron,

41 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (51), Rothmann to Anna Geyer, 19 July 1933.

42 CA, DRC, V21, 1/5, 6 Dec. 1933.

43 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (56), Rothmann to Anna Geyer, 6 Jan. 1934.

44 Interview with Dr H.C. Lambrechts, Cape Town, 8 Aug. 1991.

Verwoerd also played a central role in lobbying the state to execute *volkskongres* recommendations.⁴⁵

But a new development was hampering their efforts. If the behaviour of DRC *predikante* had previously been an occasional source of irritation, the DRC's official attitude to the Afrikaans women's organisations and their efforts to lobby the state was soon to become a major problem.

This was partly because of DRC leaders' privately ambivalent attitude to the *volkskongres*. Although they agreed to act as conveners, *Armesorg* members did so somewhat reluctantly and apprehensively. One reason for this was the church's own efforts from the early 1930s to invigorate poor relief efforts through a partnership with the state. While the women were hosting their FVR congress, *Armesorg* was negotiating a plan for 'Kerk-Staat samewerking' ['Church-State co-operation'] with the Department of Labour (where Social Work was also situated). The *predikante* found negotiations with the state slow and frustrating, but a provisional agreement for an experimental, state-subsidised and church-initiated welfare project was reached in August 1933.⁴⁶ Plans involved local poor relief commissions drawn

45 Central Archives, Pretoria (hereafter PTA), VWN, SW17/40, (volume) II, (file) 108, Delegation to the Prime Minister on 25 Feb. 1935 about the creation of a Department of Social Work. See Tayler, 'Our Poor': the politicisation of the Poor White problem'. In Tayler's analysis, the committee had a 'substantial core' of *Broederbonders* (eight of the original 28 members) that directed this ostensibly neutral and academic project. In practice however, Verwoerd was probably the only *Broeder* included in the core group of active participants. Tayler suggests that the committee which claimed to speak for the *volk*, set out to embarrass the Fusion government, and points to a series of articles supporting the committee's lobbying efforts in *Die Burger* (mouthpiece of *Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party*). However, acrimony between the *Voortsettings-komitee* and the Department of Labour and Social Welfare from 1935 reflected the latter's continued alliance with the church (see below) as much as party-political stand-offs. Moreover, according to Miller ('Science and society in the early career of H.F. Verwoerd'), this avid sociologist was indeed a skilled propagandist, but his schemes reflected no specifically ethnic nationalist leanings at this time (he did not specifically promote Afrikaans welfare organisations or single out the Afrikaner poor, neither did he expound the tenets of Christian Nationalism). Indeed, Verwoerd only began to show an clear interest in party-political maneuvering from the end of 1936. Persuaded by D.F. Malan to run his new GNP-aligned newspaper for the Transvaal, Verwoerd resigned his position at Stellenbosch. After an apprenticeship at *Die Burger* he became chief editor of *Die Transvaler* (pp.635-655).

46 For example, see CA, DRC, SKDB (Sinodale Diens vir Barmhartigheid Collection), S13/16/1, J.R. Albertyn to A.D. Luckhoff, 16 Oct. 1933. Minister of Labour Fourie's plan to appoint local inspectors of labour as the secretaries of Poor Relief committees filled *Armesorg* members with apprehension at the prospect of a loss of church control. According to Albertyn, state officials could never execute the decisions of 'twee aparte liggame' ['two separate bodies']. Moreover, they knew nothing of the wishes and methods of 'ons Kerk' ['our Church']. He concluded that the Minister of Labour could not, or would not, understand the church's point of

from DRC councils, and government subsidised regional offices. The government would recognise the commissions as authorities on poverty in their designated areas. Besides acting as local labour bureaus, they would provide statistics on poverty and unemployment and serve as a conduit between state and local authorities.⁴⁷

While the DRC's council for *Armesorg* publicly welcomed the campaign for a *volkskongres*, its private perceptions were more ambivalent. The church's own plans for rural co-ordination incorporated no professionals outside its own ranks.⁴⁸ Unlike the FVR leaders, the churchmen in *Armesorg* were also suspicious of university-based academics. The latter's prominent role provided unwelcome competition in the field of social welfare. Transvaal *Armesorg* chair J.A. Albertyn could live with the decision (by Carnegie commission members) that Verwoerd should lead the Economic section:

Maar ek gaan nie 'n deel van die sosiale kant *ook* nog aan hom afstaan nie.... Dan het hy m.i. glad te veel, en wil hy bymekaarvoeg wat nie so goed pas nie.... As ons kerkmanne net met die godsdienstige sy oorbly en niks meer van die maatskaplike kant deel kry nie dan skei ons sake wat bymekaar hoort, en voeg ons bymekaar wat nie so goed pas nie. Dit is reeds die neiging in ons tyd om maatskaplik werk glad te veel van die godsdienst te wil skei...⁴⁹

[But I won't cede the social aspect to him as well.... Then he would have far too much. He'd be wanting to add together things that don't fit so well If we churchmen are left with the religious aspect only, and we don't get more of the social side, then we're separating issues that should be dealt with together, and adding together things that don't fit so well. The trend today is already to separate social work far too much from religion...]

At the congress itself, church representatives supported the proposals put forward by other participants. But ministers also discussed the church's own plan of action at separate, closed

view, in spite the latter's long-standing attempt to forge an alliance: 'hier praat ons al *jare* oor samewerking en dit is die gevolg' ['we've spent *years* discussing co-operation and this is the result'].

47 CA, DRC, SKDB, S13/18/2, Secr. of Labour to Luckhoff, 6 July 1933.

48 *Ibid.*, S13/16/2, Albertyn to Luckhoff, 12 Oct. 1933. Albertyn argued that the church had to work 'op ons eie manier' ['in our own way'], and that outsiders ('buitestaande persone') like doctors, teachers and magistrates should therefore be excluded from joint church/state structures.

49 *Ibid.*, S13/16/1, Albertyn to Luckhoff, 23 Oct. 1933. In the absence of professional sociologists, Albertyn had been head of the 'sociological' section of the Carnegie Commission. He was now effectively upstaged by Verwoerd. DRC ministers who had worked on the Carnegie Commission also tried to organise social work training from 1931, but within a religious framework. In the early thirties they discussed this possibility with the *Vroue Sending Bond* (Women's Missionary Society). But church ministers were unable to obtain support from their university-based colleagues on the Carnegie Commission, who instead opted to help establish the Sociology and Social Work departments at Stellenbosch. See R.C. Lindeque, *Gaan Maak Jy Ook So* (Pretoria: NG Kerk Boekhandel, 1985).

meetings.⁵⁰ *Armesorg* was continuing with its negotiations with the state - and forging plans that would directly effect the women's organisations.

Since 1933, the FVR affiliates had tried to establish new structures of co-operation with the DRC - they favoured contact through a 'council for social work'. No response was forthcoming, and when approached at the *volkskongres*, the church wanted negotiations postponed. But if churchmen's public negotiations with the women were slow, this was not for lack of activity amongst the former. Even before the *volkskongres*, Cape DRC ministers planned to change the church's formal relationship with the ACVV. They envisaged a subordinate role for the women's organisation in the DRC's new *Voorwaartse Beweging* ['Forward Movement']. 'Ons het seker seer veel aan die ACVV te danke wat die verlede betref' ['We probably owe much to the ACVV as regards the past'] wrote Ds Pienaar early in 1934:

En nou dat die Kerk self veel sterker en veel meer sistematies gaan optree ten opsigte van sosiale werk, lyk dit so vanselfsprekend dat die ACVV wat net uit lede van ons Kerk bestaan en net deur lede van ons Kerk veral ondersteun word, as 'n kragtige middel in die hande van die kerk moet dien en in die voorwaartse beweging moet opgeneem word. Wil die ACVV haarself nie ten dienste van die Kerk stel nie, dan loop sy gevaar om die vroeër genote steun en simpatie te verloor.⁵¹

[And now that the Church itself will act more strongly and systematically as regards social work, it seems self-evident that the ACVV, composed solely of members of our Church and for the most part supported by members of our Church, must serve as a powerful tool in the hands of the church and must be absorbed into the Forward Movement. If the ACVV does not want to offer her services to the Church, then it [lit. she] is in danger of losing the support and sympathy [she] has enjoyed.]

Soon after the *volkskongres* of 1934, *hoofbestuur* discovered that the DRC was trying to initiate new modes of liaison with ACVV branches. The church's suggestions followed a blue-print circulated during the congress. *Armesorg* proposed that parish-based commissions deal with social work; local DRC ministers would be vested with the multiple functions of chair, treasurer and cashier. Deacons and representatives from youth and women's organisations, 'onder toesig' ['supervised by'] the Church Council would manage family welfare work.⁵²

Hoofbestuur members quickly suspended all local plans and apprehensively prepared for negotiations with a church that - in the women's analysis - wanted control of their

50 *Ibid.*, Albertyn to Luckhoff, P. du Toit, P.J. Pienaar, 4 June 1934.

51 CA, DRC, SKDB, S13/3/1, H. Pienaar to Luckhoff, 14 Feb. 1934.

52 *Ibid.*, S13/16/1, Albertyn to Luckhoff and P.J. Pienaar, July 1933.

organisation. Writing to Anna Geyer, Rothmann expressed her trust that her colleagues in the executive all opposed the church's suggestion. She acknowledged the need for co-operation, yet warned against the hunger for power exhibited by leading figures in *Armesorg*:

Die Kerk wegstoot kan ons nie; dit is teveel ons vleis en bloed. Met al sy verbrou en swakheid is hy nog so 'n essensiële deel van ons dat daar nie so iets as weier of wegstoot kan wees nie. Ons moet egter sorg dat ons die mate van saamwerk waarop ons sal ingaan met oop oë sal aanknoop. En dit is nog nie die belangrikste kant van die saak nie. Jou oë en Mevr Roome s'n, Zerilda s'n en die van my en Ida en Daisy Malan, sal oop wees. Maar ons is nie altyd daar nie ... ons moet versigtig wees om geen kans te gee aan die kerk om seggingskap oor ons te kry nie; ons handelswyse moet absoluut onbelemmerd bly, nou en in die toekoms ... [ds. Albertyn en Luckhoff] ... sal enige ding doen wat nie verkeerd is nie om die kragte van die kerk te bewaar of te vermeerder...⁵³

[We cannot push the Church away; it is too much our flesh and blood. With all its [lit. his] bungling and weakness [he] is still so essentially part of us that rejection or refusal is not possible. We must however make sure that the measure of co-operation we enter into is achieved with open eyes. And even that is not the most important. Your eyes and Mrs Roome's eyes, Zerilda [Steyn]'s and that of Ida [Theron] and Daisy Malan, will be open. But we won't always be here ... we must be careful to give the church no chance to gain power over us; our actions must remain completely unhindered, now and in the future. [Ministers Albertyn and Luckhoff] ... will do just about anything that isn't wrong to protect or increase the powers of the church...]

In Rothmann's assessment, the church saw itself as 'half-goddelik' ['half-godly'] and harboured a 'verkeerde selfvertroue' ['misjudged self-confidence']. That Geyer also distrusted the church was clear from her letter to a colleague from the Free State's OVV:

Ons hier in Kaapland kla mos al baie lank daaroor dat die Kerk ons so oor die hoof sien. Ek dink nie dit is moedswilligheid nie, maar net onbedagsaamheid omdat ons nie onder die Kerk wil staan nie. En Ds Pienaar op julle HB ... sien julle ook net so oor die hoof Persoonlik voel ek niks daarvoor om 'n Armsorg verteenwoordiger op ons HB bestuur te hê nie. Op die oomblik is daar nie gevaar dat ons sal opgesluk word nie want ons HB is baie sterk maar die teenswoordige lede bly nie altyd nie, en sal die wat daarna kom ons standpunt kan handhaaf?⁵⁴

53 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (66), Rothmann to Anna Geyer, c.Sept. 1934. Luckhoff was head of the Cape DRC's *Algemene Armesorg*.

54 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K (65), Anna Geyer to M. Visser, 28 Sept. 1934. The *Oranje Vroue Vereniging* was apparently allowing a DRC representative to attend its executive meetings. In the ACVV leadership's perception, the Free State women were sometimes slow to see through the church's manipulations. As Rothmann said, '(d)ie Vrystaters was maar nooit helder oor hierdie kerksaamwerking nie, en het hulle maklik laat gat in die kop praat...' ['the Freestaters never had clarity about this co-operation with the church, and easily allowed themselves to be taken for a ride...'] Besides temporarily trying out schemes suggested by the church, the OVV never agreed to the church's central demands and supported the ACVV. Once negotiations took place through the FVR (from early 1935) the OVV and Transvaal's SAVF supported the ACVV - ever the leading partner - in negotiations with the church.

[We here in the Cape have *long* complained that the church sidelines us. I don't think it's intentional, but just inconsiderateness because we don't want to be *under* the church. And Rev Pienaar on your executive ... also ignores you Personally I'm against having an *Armesorg* representative on our Executive council. At the moment there's no danger that we'll be swallowed up because our Executive is very strong but the present members won't always stay, and will those who come after be able to uphold our point of view?]

Co-operation with the church was a problematic necessity. 'Nee, ek wonder of jy nie reg is nie' ['no, maybe you're right'], wrote *hoofbestuur* secretary Ida Theron to Geyer. '(D)it lyk my ook ons moet maar losruk van die Kerk. Maar hoe om dit reg te kry sonder 'n duiwelse herrie? (Stuur die brief terug asb.)' ['I also think that we must rather break loose from the Church. But how to achieve this without a hellish uproar? (Please return this letter)'].⁵⁵

The ACVV accordingly drew up a proposal of co-operation with the DRC that carefully protected the independence of the organisation. As Rothmann told the Cape *Armesorg* chair A.D. Luckhoff, the proposed commissions would not preserve the autonomy and independence of ACVV branches.⁵⁶ At the next *Federale Vroue Raad* meeting early in 1935 the ACVV explained its own proposal to its northern colleagues. The respective provincial executives would exchange the minutes of executive meetings and occasionally meet to discuss matters of mutual interest. But it would be in the rural local councils of the ACVV's proposed social welfare scheme that the main interaction with the church would take place. As Rothmann explained,

Die kern van samewerking [is] 'n selfstandige Plaaslike Raad waarin die geaffilieerde liggame hulle volle identiteit en outonomie en mag van ontwikkeling behou.⁵⁷

[The crux of co-operation would be a self-sufficient Local Council in which affiliated bodies kept their full identity and autonomy and power to direct their development.]

The OVV and SAVF accepted the proposal ('(h)ierdie sienswyse vertolk die gevoelens van al die ander lede' ['(t)his point of view expresses the feelings of all the other members'])⁵⁸ and it was accordingly submitted to the DRC. At the FVR's next meeting with federal *Armesorg* representatives no formal proposals from the church were forthcoming. Participants agreed that negotiations would continue on provincial level; a joint commission would also discuss the church's idea of a national 'Christelike Raad' ['Christian Council'].

55 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.19 (25), Ida Theron to Anna Geyer, 5 Jan. 1935.

56 CA, DRC, SKDB, S13/3/1, Rothmann to Luckhoff, 7 Dec. 1934.

57 Lambrechts, 'Die Eerste Vyftig Jaar', p.197, quoting minutes of the ACVV executive meeting, Nov. 1934; CA, DRC, V21, 1/5 (ACVV executive minutes), 1 Dec. 1934.

58 ICH, PV229, 1/2/2/2/1 (Minutes of FVR meeting), 17 Jan. 1935.

But the churchmen were once again organising behind the scenes. Discussions with Cape *Armesorg* had ostensibly been postponed so that the churchmen could peruse the ACVV's proposal, but they unexpectedly presented the ACVV with a new document. Rothmann explained the situation to the rest of the executive before the scheduled meeting. Although the DRC had approved the idea of rural social welfare councils at the *volkskongres* in 1934, '[wil] Kaapse Armsorg nou hierdie Rade onder Kerklike beheer plaas' ['the Cape *Armesorg* now wants to place the councils under the church's control'].⁵⁹ Accordingly, it sought the 'help' of the women's organisations. Rothmann was presumably being sardonic - the DRC was in fact asking the ACVV to surrender its independent status. *Armesorg* proposed that the ACVV accept 'kerklike gesag ... dat die ACVV meer of min soos V.S. Bond onder kerklike beheer sal staan en dat twee lede van Armsorg op ACVV Hoofbestuur sal sitting hê' ['churchly authority ... that the ACVV will stand under the church's control more or less like the Women's Missionary Society and that two members of *Armesorg* will serve on the ACVV's executive'].⁶⁰ Evidently Rothmann's perception of self-important churchmen was not far-fetched. *Armesorg* rejected the very idea of DRC representatives serving on a local, state-created council as insulting. Church dignitaries could not be expected to negotiate with congregation members representing an independent 'civilian' organisation. As the *broeders* (brothers) explained:

[daar] word voorgestel dat, vir die ko-ordineer van die werksaamhede van die Kerk en die ACVV die dienste sal ingeroep word van 'n voorgestelde *Plaaslike Raad*, 'n publieke liggaam wat die vroueverenigings verwag deur die Staat in die lewe sal geroep word. So 'n voorstel is egter vir die NG Kerk nie aanneembaar nie en kan ons nooit aanvaar nie. Dit is onnatuurlik en onprakties. Die NG Kerk sou dan die hulp en dienste moet soek van 'n vreemde, nie-kerklike liggaam - 'n burgerlike liggaam - wanneer hy met die ACVV (onthou, almal lede van die kerk) wil raadpleeg of onderhandel insake opheffingswerk aan sy eie lede! Dit is tog te veel gevra; dit tog sal nie dien om die eer prestige van die Kerk hoog te hou nie.⁶¹

[it has been suggested that, to co-ordinate the activities of the Church and ACVV the services of a *Local Council* will be utilised - the women's organisations are expecting the State to create this public body. This suggestion is however not acceptable to the Dutch Reformed Church and we will never be able to accept it. It is unnatural and impractical. The Dutch Reformed Church would then have to seek the help and services of a foreign, non-ecclesiastical body - a civilian body - when it [lit. he] wants to consult or negotiate with the ACVV (remember, all of them members of the church) about poor relief amongst [his] own members! This is asking too much; after all this will not serve to hold high the honour and prestige of the Church.]

59 CA, DRC, V21, 1/5, 20 Feb. 1935.

60 *Ibid.*

61 *Ibid.*, (extract from letter quoted in minute book).

The ACVV executive firmly rejected the church's proposal. Tensions at the subsequent meeting with *Armesorg* probably ran particularly high for minister's wife and ACVV president Minni Roome.⁶² Her personal protest 'as predikantsvrou en kerksvrou' ['as minister's wife and churchwoman'] singled out the church's 'insinuations' that the ACVV benefitted from a mistaken public perception of its 'kerklike' ['churchly'] status. She reminded the ministers that *Armesorg* was initially founded at the request of the ACVV and first received its financial support from the women's organisation. 'Dit is die NG Kerk wat self die ACVV as 'n kerklike liggaam beskou...' ['It is the DR Church itself which regards the ACVV as a churchly body...']⁶³ *Hoofbestuur*'s official rejection of the church's proposal emphasised the fundamental importance of the ACVV's status as an independent women's organisation:

Verskillende werk eis verskillende werkmetodes. Die inspirasie van die ACVV se werk is dat dit 'n selfregerende vroueliggaam is. Die ondervinding van dertig jaar het dit bevestig; daar is in die werk van ons vereniging niks as vooruitgang, en geen rede wat wys dat dit nodig is om die vereniging opnuut op ander lees te skoei nie. Die bande tussen ons en onse Kerke is reeds baie sterk. Wat onse werk betref is verder saamtrekking van hierdie bande nie nodig nie...⁶⁴

[Different kinds of work require different approaches. The inspiration of the ACVV's work is its status as a self-governing body of women. Thirty years' experience has confirmed this; our organisation's work shows nothing but progress, and no reason for casting it to a different mould. The bonds between us and our Churches are already very strong. As regards our work, further narrowing of these bonds is unnecessary...]

Additional reasons for the ACVV's refusal included the uncertain status of its properties, potential loss of membership, and waning public interest if the women's organisation should join the church. *Hoofbestuur* emphasised the importance of federal links to 'die Afrikaanse vrouens ... veral met die oog op die vorming van 'n beleid vir maatskaplike werk vir die hele land' ['the Afrikaans women, especially as regards formulating a policy of social work for the whole country'].⁶⁵

This unequivocal rejection by the ACVV did not deter the *broeders* from going ahead with their own plans. Rothmann, allied with her academic colleagues on the *Voortsettings-*

62 Her husband was minister of the Sea Point DRC and a leader in the *Helpmekaar* movement.

63 *Armesorg* was first called *Inwendige Zending* (see Chapter Two). Roome proceeded to list the DRC's past acknowledgement of the ACVV's generous financial support for the church's poor relief efforts, as well as past efforts by the church to participate in the ACVV's financial decisions.

64 CA, DRC, V21, 1/5 (ACVV executive minutes), 20 Feb. 1935.

65 *Ibid.*

komitee, tried to establish whether the DRC was in fact prepared to acknowledge the independence of ACVV branches and refrain from competing with them on the terrain of social work.⁶⁶ As the chair pointed out to the *Armesorg* representatives on the committee, the church was disregarding a *volkskongres* decision: '[die] voortsettingskomitee kan nie aangaan as hy nie die samewerking van die Kerk het nie' [the *Voortsettingskomitee* cannot continue without the co-operation of the Church'].⁶⁷ But co-operation from DRC men was not forthcoming - nor was the church prepared to withdraw a new fund-raising campaign for its own social welfare schemes that competed with the committee's efforts to raise money.⁶⁸ As the ACVV vice-president (and the Cape Administrator's wife) put it, 'Armesorg speel *nie* die game met Volkskongres besluite nie en ons sal moet styfstaan' ['*Armesorg* is *not* playing the game with *Volkskongres* decisions and we will have to stand firm'].⁶⁹

At a subsequent meeting, the church again presented the women with its plans for parish-based poor relief commissions - due for publication in the DRC's *Kerkbode*. This time, Luckhoff had secured the support of brothers from the Transvaal and Free State DRCs. *Armesorg* committees would deal with a wide range of social work. They would be run by deacons - aided by 'een of meer ywerige susters' ['one or more industrious sisters'].⁷⁰ As Rothmann explained to her northern FVR colleagues, '(o)ns het met baie groot verbasing die ding aangehoor' ['we listened with great astonishment']:

Ons het hulle toe daarop gewys dat dit, indien uitgevoer, die agteruitgang van die vroueverenigings sou beteken. Ook verduidelik dat dit natuurlik onmoontlik vir ons was om daarmee saam te stem; mooi gepraat; ernstig gepraat; alles het niks gehelp nie. Ds Alheit sê net 'wel, dan moet julle onder die Kerk inkom'.⁷¹

66 ICH, PV229, 2/18/1/1/1, E. Theron (Secretariat, Volkskongres) to ACVV secretary. Theron sent a copy of her letter to the DRC's *Armesorg* council on behalf of the ACVV. Rothmann also refers to this on 3 Sept. 1935 (CA, A1953, 2/3): 'Ek sit mos nou tuis, en wag vir die datum ... vir my en Prof. Verwoerd om die Fed Armesorg weer te gaan probeer oortuig van hulle kwaaië weë....' ['I'm sitting at home waiting for the date ... for me and Prof. Verwoerd to go to Federal Armesorg to again try and convince them of their evil ways...']

67 CA, DRC, SKDB, S13/17/1 (Minutes of the financial committee of the *Voortsettingskomitee*), 12 March 1935. When Roome asked the DRC ministers why they were putting forward proposals in terms of which they opposed the plans they had supported at the *volkskongres*, Luckhoff's enigmatic reply was that they had voted 'as burgerlikes' ['as citizens'] but opposed the plans 'as predikante' ['as ministers of the church'].

68 *Ibid.*, S13/16/1, Albertyn to Luckhoff, 3 May 1935; S13/17/1, 12 March 1935.

69 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.L (3), J.H. Conradie to Rothmann, 9 July 1935.

70 CA, A1953, A1/1/1, Rothmann to Broers and Pellissier, 1 July 1935.

71 *Ibid.*

[We then pointed out that if this plan were carried out, it would mean the decline of the women's organisations. We also explained that we could of course not agree; spoke nicely to them; spoke seriously to them; nothing helped. Rev. Alheit simply said 'well, then you'll have to come under the church'.]

In July, *Armesorg* outlined its scheme in *Die Kerkbode*. As Rothmann wrote, 'vir ons lyk dit of onse eie kerk die vroueverenigings as sulks wil dood hê' ['It seems to us that our own church wants to have the women's organisations dead'].⁷² For the moment however, the ACVV had the full support of its membership. At the ACVV congress of 1935 a church spokesman put forward the DRC's views, but branch representatives ratified their executives' decisions and reaffirmed the ACVV's independent status.⁷³ Because the church's plans affected the other provinces as well, the women's organisations now planned further negotiations through the *Federale Vroue Raad*.

But the situation was set to become more complicated as the DRC's own plans for working with government were finalised. In May, the FVR had asked the church to request equal government recognition for the women's organisations. But suspicions that the Department of Labour and Social Work were 'kop in een mus met die Armsorg' ['hand in glove with *Armesorg*']⁷⁴ were confirmed when the women's organisations (and their academic colleagues in the *Voortsettingskomitee*) read press reports of new plans for State-Church co-operation. A re-organised Department of Social Work now incorporated prominent *Armesorg* council member P. du Toit as Commissioner of Social Welfare, and would soon launch 'n stelsel wat soos 'n byenes sal werk vir die volksopheffing...' ['a scheme that will work like a bee hive for the people's upliftment...']⁷⁵ The proposed scheme envisaged regional welfare commissions composed of two government and five church representatives. *Armesorg* committees would be mandated to do welfare work on parish level and to incorporate all relevant social work bodies. An overall advisory body also had church and government members.

72 CA, A1953, A1/1/1, Rothmann to Conradie, 2 June 1935. Rothmann explained that if the church really intended to respect the women's organisations' independence, it would have to provide *Armesorg* commissions in some 250 towns where FVR affiliates already existed with alternative constitutions and areas of work.

73 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/3, Report of ACVV congress held at Somerset East, Oct. 1935.

74 USDC MER, 55.M.1.K.L (4), Visser to Rothmann, 11 July 1935.

75 ICH, PV229, 2/18/1/1/1, Rothmann to M. Roome, Sept. 1935. The letter includes a quote from *Die Volksblad*. At this time, Social Welfare was still part of the Department of Labour.

A scheme that excluded the women's organisations, gave the DRC overall control of local efforts to deal with poor whites and a dominant position in dealings with the state called for urgent action. The FVR immediately secured an interview with the Minister of (Labour and) Welfare. It also resubmitted its own proposal to the new Commissioner of Welfare - to date no response had been forthcoming. As the FVR secretary explained, the State-Church scheme would deny some twelve thousand women who ran extensive health and social welfare projects authority over work best left to females:

Familiesorg of gesinswerk ... staan beter onder leiding van die vrou as die man, en word ook beter deur haar uitgevoer. Ander dele van die rehabilitasiewerk waarmee u Departement besig is, soos b.v. werkverskaffing vir mans, kan goed onder leiding van mans staan ... ; ander dele, soos b.v. behuising het weer die leiding en sienswyse van beide mans en vrouens nodig. Die ideale leiding moet dus kom van 'n gesag waarin beide mans en vrouens deel het Die Fed. Vroueraad voel derhalwe dat dit die werk van gesinsopheffing en rehabilitasie baie sal benadeel as ... 'n suiwer manlike groep die beleid opstel en oor die uitvoer daarvan gesag dra - selfs al word die vrouens ingeroep om praktiese werk in verband daarmee te doen.⁷⁶

[Family welfare ... benefits more from the guidance of women than men, and is also better executed by women. Men can deal successfully with other aspects of rehabilitation work done by your Department, for example work provision for men. Some aspects like housing need the guidance and viewpoints of both men and women. Therefore the ideal leadership comes from an authority incorporating both men and women The *Federale Vroue Raad* therefore feels that family rehabilitation and upliftment would suffer if ... a purely male group draws up and executes policies - even if the women were called in to do the practical work.]

The ministry's compromise decision - made at a meeting with church representatives who opposed any female representation - was that regional Social Work councils would have two FVR, two government and five church members.⁷⁷ Local *Armesorg* committees would still be controlled by the church. The women were unimpressed at their minority status and indignant at the Department's paternalist behaviour and unilateral decision-making: 'hulle kan darem nie so met ons aangaan net of ons volkies is nie' ['they shouldn't be allowed to treat us like coloured people'].⁷⁸ Rothmann's comment is rich with peculiarly South African connotations and difficult to translate. In essence, she was saying that such treatment was suitable for blacks, not women. 'Volkies' is a diminutive for coloured farm-workers, a

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, FVR Secr. to du Toit, 4 Oct. 1935. Not all DRC ministers wanted women excluded from decision-making. See CA, DRC, SKDB, 13/16/1, J. du Plessis to Luckhoff, 28 Dec. 1934.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Secr. of Labour (D. Norval) to FVR Secr., Nov. 1935; CA, DRC, SKDB, 5/3/18/2, document dated 12 March 1936, indicating changes made by the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare to the function and composition of the proposed 'Maatskaplike Welsyns Kommissie'. The minister added representation for the *Federale Vroue Raad* to the original plan.

⁷⁸ USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (69), 9 April 1936, Rothmann to Anna Geyer; ICH, PV229, 2/18/1/1/1, Rothmann to Norval, 14 April 1936.

word embedded in the racist and paternalist discourse of (white Afrikaans) farmers in the western Cape. In Rothmann's metaphor, farmers need not involve 'volksies' in decisions that affected the workers. Instead of treating them as equals, the government degraded women by subjecting them to similar unilateral and paternalist decisions.

However, as an interim measure, the women agreed to participate in the regional councils - but continued to lobby for their own programme and inclusion in policy making.⁷⁹ As Rothmann explained to an apparently peeved Secretary for Social Welfare (he had complained that 'die vrouens is altyd teen my' ['the women are always against me']), they were used to compromise and prepared to work with a department whose 'economic' priorities did not suit their own ideas about social work. 'Soos vrouens is, neem ons maar wat ons kan kry, en maak die beste daarvan ... glo my, vrouens is gewoon om hulle te skik na die wil van andere. Ek dink ons is baas-[in]skikkers...' ['As women are, we take what we can get, and make the best of it ... believe me, women are used to accommodating themselves to the will of others. I think we are masters of the art...']⁸⁰ But they objected to a state policy that only recognised the church. Already disregarded to the point of insult by the DRC, Afrikaans women hoped that 'their people' in government would not do the same:

as daardie gevoel van veronagsaming teenoor u Departement ook ... ontstaan, waarheen sal ons as Afrikaanse vrouens ons dan wend? U moet ons help, Mnr. Norval. Ons is u opregte vriende; hoe kan ons anders wees? Waarheen sal ons gaan as nie na ons eie mense nie?⁸¹

[If that attitude of disregard were also to come from your Department, to whom could we as Afrikaans women then turn? You must help us, Mr Norval. We are your sincere friends; how could we not be? Where could we go if not to our own people?]

By late 1937 little had changed. In the few areas where *Armesorg*/social welfare committees were functioning, their focus was on state employment and 'farmer rehabilitation' schemes.⁸² FVR leaders had little regard for churchmen's organisational skills and expected the church's social work plans to fail.⁸³ Knowing that the founding of a new department of Social Welfare was also imminent, the ACVV withheld its nominees from the committees.

79 ICH, PV229, 2/18/1/1/1, Secr. of Labour and Social Welfare to FVR Secr., 21 March 1936; ICH, PV229, 2/18/1/1/1, Rothmann to Norval, 14 April 1936.

80 *Ibid.*, Rothmann to Norval, 14 April 1936.

81 *Ibid.*, Rothmann to Norval, 16 April 1936. The letter was, as the department put it, 'half-amptelik' ['semi-official']. She was writing in her personal capacity but with her organisation's support.

82 *Ibid.*, FVR Secr. to Secr. of Labour and Social Welfare, 7 June 1937; Norval to I. Theron, 19 June 1937.

At branch level, relations with the local church and *Armesorg* councils ranged from amicable to strained. In the 1936 edition of *Eendrag*, Rothmann had emphasised that her rural travels had taught her the importance of the co-operation of 'die mans' ['the men']. The support of various men - DRC ministers and deacons, farmers, teachers and mayors had facilitated work in several towns. 'By al die ... plekke is daar agting vir die ACVV' ['In all these ... places there is respect for the ACVV']. Her reports in *Eendrag* also included politic remarks concerning the good working relationships between ACVV branches involved in health work and the DRC:

Ons kon geen verwydering tussen kerk en ACVV agterkom nie. Inteendeel, is daar oral 'n begeerte om die vroue net soos voorheen met hulle werk te laat voortgaan. 'n Vertroue in die kerkvastheid van die ACVV het ons ook gevind, wat baie aanmoedigend was.⁸⁴

[We could not discover any division between the church and ACVV. On the contrary, a desire to let the women proceed as before is evident everywhere. We also found belief in the ACVV's commitment to the church - this was very encouraging.]

Indeed, cases where local churches tried to dominate ACVV branches were relatively uncommon. But in Rietbron, the branch resisted the founding of a local health committee with a majority of *broeders* from *Armesorg*. In retaliation, the local *predikant* and his wife pointedly boycotted the branch's bazaar. The ACVV secretary's approving comments about the speech of another, visiting DRC minister who opened the bazaar seemed to link the conflict to male chauvinism. She hinted at the depth of antipathy between *Armesorg* and the ACVV women who dominated parish philanthropy:

Wat sal ons gegee het dat hulle, die pragtige kragtige suiwere waarheid omtrent die ACVV se bestaan en weldoen kon hoor uit die mond van so 'n *man* soos Ds. Steyn.... Sodra ons weer in botsing loop sal ek aan u skrywe, maar ek dink na ons brief sal dit net so doodloop en ons sal maar op 'n klein skaaltjie aangaan met ons registrasie. Sodra die ACVV 'n natuurlike of onnatuurlike dood sterf sal die Armesorg gebore word en drink aan die gemeente!⁸⁵

[What would we not have given that they could hear the beautiful, forceful pure truth about the ACVV's work and philanthropy from the mouth of a *man* like Rev. Steyn.... When we clash again I will immediately write to you, but I think after our letter it will die out and we will continue on a small scale with our registration. As

83 *Ibid.*, Broers to Horak (quoted in letter by Mrs Horak), 19 July 1935. Broers (president of the SAVF) commented that church deacons did not have the organising ability of the women's organisations, and that barring a few exceptions within the women's organisations, minister's wives in the cities did not achieve much. Her assumption was obviously that a social work system run by churchmen would involve their wives. The best response to the DRC's plans, she argued, was to ignore any new structures set up by the church and to ensure that *Vroue Federasie* affiliates did not lose any good workers to them.

84 *Eendrag*, Jan. 1936, p.9.

85 CA, A1953, A1/1/1, L. van [Fick] to Rothmann, 8 Nov. 1937.

soon as the ACVV dies a natural or unnatural death *Armesorg* will be born and will suckle from the congregation!]

ACVV leaders certainly took special care to ensure that branches retained control of health committees. In large districts where health work would weigh heavily on one ACVV branch, ACVV members worked together with other professionals and organisations - but *hoofbestuur* emphasised that the women should have majority representation. As Rothmann explained,

Hoofbestuur se probleem is steeds die belange van die TAK. 'n Sterk G.K. veral as daar saamgewerk word met hospitaalraad, skoolraad, magistraat, predikante ens is so geneig om weg te loop van die tak; ek sien dit oor en oor. Tog kan jy self dink dat dit vir onse vereniging ongesond is, en daardeur ook - na ons beskeie mening - vir die welsyn van land en volk...⁸⁶

[The executive's concern is ever the interest of the BRANCH. A strong health committee, especially if there is co-operation with hospital and school boards, ministers and the magistrate, is inclined to move away from the branch. I see this again and again. And yet you can imagine that it is unhealthy for our organisation - and therefore also - in my humble opinion - for country and *volk*...]

The FVR made a determined effort to gain the sympathy of officials from the new Department of Social Welfare when it was established in 1937. As Rothmann would later put it, '(e)n toe slaan ons die kloue in by die nuwe Dept. Volkswelsyn...' ['and then we stuck our claws into the new Department of Social Welfare...']⁸⁷ As she wrote at the time of her first dealings with the minister, his decision to subsidise social workers employed by welfare organisations was cause for optimism:

onse onderhoud met Kuschke het ons veel plesier verskaf. Soos dit bepaald lyk, sal ons veel meer van die nuwe Dept kry as ons ooit verwag het ... dit lyk of onse Volkskongres-ideale goeie kans het vir uitvoering ...⁸⁸

[our interview with Kuschke gave us much pleasure. It definitely looks as if we'll get much more from the new Department than we ever expected ... it looks as if our *Volkskongres*-ideals stand a good chance...]

The FVR was yet again attempting to establish a reciprocal relationship which recognised the women's experience in matters of social welfare: 'Ons verlang leiding oor maatskaplike werk as 'n geheel. U Departement mag miskien ook leiding wil hê. Ons wil ... handel met

⁸⁶ CA, A1953, 2/29, 116, Rothmann to M. Laubscher, 3 Dec. 1936. See also CA, A1953, 2/3, 'ACVV Gesondheidswerk: Reëls vir Gesondheidskomitees'. See CA, A1953, A1/1/1, Burgersdorp ACVV president to I. Theron, 24 Jan. 1935 for another local perspective on the difficulties of working with *Armesorg*.

⁸⁷ USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.L(28) Rothmann to H.C. Lambrechts, 8 April 1954.

⁸⁸ USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.L(66), Rothmann to M. Roome, 3 Oct. 1937.

sentrale gesaghebbende mense ...' ['We want guidance about social work as a whole. Perhaps your Department would also like guidance. We want ... to deal with people in central positions of authority...']⁸⁹

The DRC men had been very put out when they found that they no longer had a *predikant* in the department, but also tried to forge a relationship with the new administration.⁹⁰ Once again their plans excluded FVR affiliates. Kuschke told FVR representatives that the church's plans for 'gesinsarbeiding' (family-oriented welfare work) involved employing social workers; the state had agreed to the DRC's request for the sole right to appoint social workers in the Church-State areas. As the women pointed out indignantly, they had suggested the scheme for state-subsidised workers in the first place: the churchmen were 'kinders op die [maatskaplike] gebied' ['children when it comes to social welfare'] and would never achieve anything without the women's organisations. Moreover, a DRC monopoly of subsidised workers would affect them severely - most of their branches were in the designated areas. At a subsequent meeting with church and state representatives, the church backed down on its demand and reluctantly agreed not to oppose the women's organisations if they applied for subsidies.⁹¹

If the DRC had achieved an exclusive partnership in its past dealings with the state, its position was now in decline. As the ACVV explained in support of the new department, 'voor dit 'n aparte Departement was ... het ons, vroue, haas geen punte van samewerking ooit kon vind nie' ['before a separate Department was founded ... we, women, could find scarcely any co-operation'].⁹² In the bureaucratic separation of 'Labour' from 'Social Welfare' the women perceived a shift in the treatment of white poverty that might favour their organisations. *Volkswelsyn* seemed less inclined to focus on unemployment, and more responsive to notions of rehabilitation, education and *gesinswerk* (work with families). For the ACVV, employment and 'economy' remained male terrain. Once again, they explained the need for a different focus in solving the poor white question:

89 ICH, PV229, 2/13/1/1/1, Rothmann speaking at a meeting with Minister of Social Welfare G.A. Kuschke, 30 Nov. 1937.

90 CA, DRC, SKDB, S13/16/1, A.D. Luckhoff to J.R. Albertyn, 2 Sept. 1937. The former Commissioner of Social Welfare, P. du Toit, was not given a position in the new department, largely because of the failure of the Church-State schemes.

91 ICH, PV229, 2/13/1/1/1, Discussion of the relationship between women's organisations and Church-State scheme, 9 Dec. 1937.

92 *Ibid.*, FVR Secr. to Prime Minister, 6 March 1939.

Die rehabilitasie van ons volk ... hoewel dit nie sonder gesonde ekonomiese toestande kan geskied nie, rus, na die mening van die vroue, tog nie op ekonomiese grondslag nie.... Steeds het ons in die verlede gevoel dat 'n nou verbinding tussen Volkswelsyn en Arbeid neig om die gewig aan die ekonomiese kant te lê: die ander kant - die kant wat die vrou so raak sien - kry nie die regte aandag nie. Intendeel meen ons dat die huidige verbinding met Onderwys ... veelbelowend is. Ons wil u ernstig vra om dit vir ons te bewaar.⁹³

[The rehabilitation of our *volk* ... cannot take place without healthy economic conditions, and yet according to the women's opinion, it does not depend upon an economic basis In the past we always felt that a close connection between Social Welfare and Labour tended to give weight to the economic side: the other side - the side that women notice - did not receive the right attention. In fact we believe that the present link with Education is very promising. It is our urgent request that you should preserve this.]

That the Department of Social Welfare had indeed accepted the women's viewpoint on family welfare work was evident at a decisive meeting between state and church officials in 1939. The context was mutual agreement that the Church-State schemes had failed. Local *Armesorg* committees were no longer functioning and had been unable to meet the conditions for employing social workers.

Even so, an undeterred *Armesorg* still wanted the church to play a leading role in social work. Its latest plans involved deacons on 'skakel-rade' ['co-ordinating councils'] who would employ the state-subsidised social workers in their parishes. The minister however was quick to realise that such a move would challenge the authority of Afrikaans women's organisations, themselves employing a steadily expanding number of social workers. Moreover, Kuschke had apparently absorbed (or at any rate, shared) the FVR's philosophy that social work was best left in women's hands, and told the ministers to restrict themselves to traditionally male territory. As he explained,

Die Kerk kan 'n terrein van maatskaplike werk uitkies wat die vrouens minder goed kan dek Die kerklike masjienerie bestaan uit mans. Die vrou het 'n spesiale plig uit hoofde haar spesiale aanleg. Waar daar goed georganiseerde, d.w.s. op potestaande vroue verenigings is in al vier die Provinsies, kan dit nie die Staat se bedoeling wees om hulle te verdring nie. Die besoek en die bearbeiding van die huisgesin is iets wat veilig gelaat kan word in die hande van die vroueverenigings; maar daar is ander werk wat vroue glad nie, of nie so goed kan doen nie; die beheer van 'n nedersetting bv. Daar bly dus 'n groot terrein vir die mans.⁹⁴

[The Church could choose an area of social work that the women could not cover so well The church's machinery is run by men. Women have a special task because of their special abilities. While well organised women's organisations that are firmly on their feet exist in all four of the Provinces, the State cannot act so as to push them aside. Visiting and working with families can safely be left in the hands of the

93 *Ibid.*

94 CA, DRC, SKDB, S13/16/1, 'Vergadering gehou in die Kantoer van die Sekretaris van Volkswelsyn', 10 July 1939.

women's organisations; but there are different kinds of work that women cannot do, or not as ably. For example running a settlement. A large area therefore remains for the men.]

Why did the church try to convince the women's organisations to cede their independence, and act so vociferously against them when they refused? After all (as Kuschke reminded the churchmen), many ACVV members were married to *predikante* and the women did the kind of work that the church approved. As Rothmann would point out during a later, bitter confrontation with the church, 'dit is mos nie vreemdelinge wat in die Sinode sit nie, maar die vroue se eie mans, broers en familiebetrekkings...' ['after all, the Synod members are not strangers, but the women's own husbands, brothers and relatives...']⁹⁵ Moreover, why exactly did the women oppose the church's actions so determinedly?

ACVV members themselves interpreted the events of the 1930s (and beyond) as gender-based conflict. As one woman explained of churchmen's refusal to accept the organisation's independent status: '(a)g, dit was maar net 'n gevoel daardie tyd nog dat vrouens behoort nie die soortvan ding te doen nie, jy weet, dis als onder die mans' ['oh, it was simply still the attitude that women shouldn't do that sort of thing, you know, everything should be under the men'].⁹⁶

Hoofbestuur's response to the church's suggestions in 1935 had emphasised the fundamental importance of the ACVV's status as a 'self-regerende vroue liggaam' ['self-governing body of women']. 'Kerklike gesag' ['churchly authority'] was of course by definition male - the unstated premise was the women's unwillingness to become handmaidens to an institution wholly controlled by men. ACVV leaders were also exhibiting heightened sensitivity to gender conflict in other contexts. In 1930 Geyer, Rothmann, Van der Lingen and Roome resolved that they did not want to be members of the Housing League together with men. Roome thus explained her resignation from this organisation: '(s)ij bedank as lid omdat sij dit nie wenslik ag dat man en vrou op dieselfde lichaam sal dien nie' ['she resigned as member because she does not think it desirable that man and woman should serve on the

95 USDC, MER, 55.K.G (2), Rothmann to J.S. Gericke, 18 March 1950. The church's attempts to subdue the women's organisations continued for more than twenty years. In 1949 this increasingly bitter struggle reached a new crisis point and became an issue of public debate. The ACVV again refused to join the DRC. In the face of threats that a rival women's organisation would be formed, Rothmann and others publicly accused the DRC of trying to crush their organisation. In the Transvaal, the DRC founded its own woman's organisation (the *Bond van Dienaresse*) in 1950. The Cape DRC followed in 1957 with the *Sustersvereniging van Kaapland*. (Algemene Komitee van die Vrouediens, *NGK Handleiding Dienswerk Vrouelidmate* (Cape Town: NGK Uitgewers, 1983)).

96 Interview with E. du Toit, Paarl, 28 Sept. 1989.

same body'].⁹⁷ In this instance the issue was perhaps their lack of an independent organisational base - after all, ACVV members had represented their organisation on bodies like the *Federale Raad vir Moederkuns en Kindersorg* (Federal Council for Mothercraft and Child Care) and the *Voortsettingskomitee* together with male colleagues. Reflecting on the dynamics of negotiations with the church during the 1930s, Rothmann later explained the inherent danger of sharing organisational structures with the opposite sex:

die voorgestelde Raad ... het ... nooit verwesenlik geword nie. Daar sal ook nooit so iets kom nie, nie solank die vroue aan hulle onafhanklikheid vashou nie. Op hierdie gebied vertrou die mans en die vroue mekaar nie - of liever die vroue vertrou die mans nie. Hulle moet ook hierdie wantroue bewaar, want dit is tog baie duidelik dat m.b.t. saamwerking die mans deurgaans een beleid het: ek en jy is een, maar daardie een is ek. Dit is hulle aard, miskien goed ook, maar ons moet net weet dit is daar.⁹⁸

[the suggested Council ... was ... never realised. Nothing like that will ever develop, not while the women hold on to their independence. On this terrain the men and women don't trust each other - or rather the women don't trust the men. They must also preserve this distrust, because it is after all very clear that as regards co-operation the men always have one policy: you and I are one, but I am that one. It's their nature, and perhaps it's good, but we must just know that's how it is.]

In fact, ACVV leadership's response to the church's overtures highlights an important aspect of the particular maternalist philosophy developed by female Afrikaner nationalists and an interesting aspect of gender conflict within Afrikaner nationalism. This was all too evidently a society that specified roles for men and women. Both sexes also articulated their actions in gendered terms. If the women were wont to speak of 'ons vroue' and 'die mans', the *predikante* spoke of 'ons kerkmanne' and addressed each other as 'broer' ['brother'] in their letters. However, Rothmann and her colleagues not only articulated a highly gendered discourse that specified *vrouesake* (women's issues) and *manspolitiek* (men's politics). According to Rothmann, women strove towards a feminine spirituality that drew humanity onto a higher plane, and was morally superior to the often corrupt world of party politics.⁹⁹

97 CA, DRC, V21, 2/1/1/5 (Cape Town), 26 July 1930.

98 USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.L (22), Rothmann to H.C. Lambrechts, 3 Nov. 1953.

99 In one revealing letter, written in 1930, Rothmann lamented the actions of a woman friend involved in party-politics who had apparently acted as unethically as some nationalist men, and contrasted an ideal of female (but non-feminist) solidarity: 'Even though the men act like that in their politics, I so hoped and trusted that the women would not do likewise We women must understand and support each other; the bond that exists between us should not strengthen 'feminism', but rather 'Eternal Womanliness' that draws humanity 'towards her' (my translation). See footnote 1 for a more extensive extract from this letter, where Rothmann quotes from Faust to explain her notion of the 'Ewig Weibliche' ['Eternal Womanliness'].

In keeping with this culture of separate spheres, the women held that females should focus on 'family welfare'. But they went further - this was also a dominion ideally governed by women.¹⁰⁰ Pellissier (the FVR secretary) had objected to plans that church and state officials - a 'suiwer manlike groep' ['a purely male group'] should formulate social work policy. The women were also convinced that *gesinswerk* (family welfare) was of the utmost importance in solving the 'poor white question' - more important than the work provision schemes favoured by the church. Moreover, they were intent on doing this women's work from an independent organisational basis.¹⁰¹

A comment by Sonya Michel on American maternalist reformers also helps put the ACVV's efforts to assert itself in the face of male opposition in perspective. According to Michel, the secret of American women's 'political success lay in the fact that while they were extending their own sphere of influence and attempting to gain social entitlements, they were also affirming women's traditional role as mothers ... whether deliberately or by default, the way reformers conceptualized women and motherhood usually reflected the deep-seated and long-held values of their own societies and particular cultures'. It was when women 'attempted to challenge gender conventions' that they 'met the most resistance'.¹⁰²

Afrikaner women never fundamentally challenged the idea of a nationalist movement in which *manspolitiek* was the driving force. Even Rothmann with her sharp eye for discrepancies in the behaviour of her male comrades never questioned that women's central function was motherhood, and theirs a separate sphere of *vrouesake*. It was when Afrikaner women sought to define *vrouesake* for themselves, and even to enlarge this female dominion, that they were met with indifference and resistance from nationalist men, many of whom did not share the vision of relative female independence.

100 See Chapter Two, reference 139 for an explanation of my usage of this term.

101 Rothmann also drew on her idea of the 'Ewig Weibliche' in 1949 (when conflict between the ACVV and the DRC became a public issue). She discussed the 'verdruk van die vrou se werk en waarde' ['repression of woman's work and worth'] by the DRC: 'We also know that the women of our *volk* have had a very important albeit unadvertised part in nationbuilding ['volksbou']. "Eternal Womanhood draws us together". We must therefore defend our self-sufficiency ['self-standigheid'] in all respects. Were we to give this up, we would be untrue to our calling. Were they to found *Dienaresse* [the proposed DRC women's associations], it would not be the worst calamity. Were the ACVV and its sister organisations to die out, that would also not be the worst. But were we to admit that women's leadership is not enough, and that we must be supported ['bygestaan'] by the men, that would be the greatest calamity...' (USDC, MER, 55.M.1.K.11 (117), Rothmann to Anna Geyer, 27 Oct. 1949.)

102 Sonya Michel, 'The Limits of Maternalism: Policies toward American Wage-Earning Mothers During the Progressive Era' in Koven and Michel, *Mothers of a New World*, p.277.

It was the notion of a female dominion of social work that church leadership would not accept. If some *predikante* were content to work with an independent ACVV, others refused to accept the idea that an independent women's organisation should organise family welfare in 'their' parishes. As an angry *Armesorg* member told Kuschke when the latter explained his position that the DRC should stay out of parish-based social work,

Die kerk moet nie daardeur uit sy posisie verdruk word nie. As hulle werksters kan aanstel en die Kerk is daartoe, dan sal daar 'n storm in die wêreld wees.¹⁰³

[The church should not be forced from its position by this. If they can appoint workers and the Church is excluded, that will cause an uproar.]

Church leadership's steady opposition to the ACVV from 1930 and for decades thereafter certainly suggests an implacable male chauvinism. But this does not entirely explain the churchmen's actions. After all, for three decades, NP politicians and churchmen had praised women's initiative. Although they liked to specify what women could *not* do and should *not* be, the FVR affiliates had never encountered opposition and the church had never tried to interfere with the ACVV.

One reason for the church's change of attitude in the 1930s was the rapid transformation of 'poor relief' into 'social work' - a process that privileged professionals with 'scientific' approaches to poverty and threatened the 'traditional' role of a benevolent DRC. Another, crucial, aspect was the state's growing willingness to subsidise social welfare. If the women's organisations had steadily (and as they sometimes liked to emphasise, quietly) built up a large philanthropic practice, poor relief had remained an important function of the DRC. The women's conviction that social work was of central importance was compatible with the new sociology. But the parochial members of *Armesorg* did not only perceive academics like Verwoerd as competitors who threatened to sever 'religion' from 'social work', but were also unwilling to share organisational structures with professionals such as doctors and magistrates. Luckhoff's contemptuous dismissal of the ACVV's rural social work councils referred to 'daardie kosmopolitaanse rade' ['those cosmopolitan councils'].¹⁰⁴

103 CA, DRC, SKDB, S13/16/1, 'Vergadering gehou in die kantoor van die Sekretaris van Volkswelsyn', 10 July 1939.

104 *Ibid.*, Luckhoff to Albertyn, 17 Oct. 1935. And yet both Luckhoff and Albertyn had higher education. Albertyn obtained a BA degree from the Huguenote College in Wellington, completed his theological studies at the Stellenbosch Seminary and then obtained a degree at Princeton University in the United States. Luckhoff had a similar educational background. See W.E. van Wyk, 'Die Bediening van Dr A.D. Luckhoff as Armsorgsekreteraris van die Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk' (M.A. dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1986) and C.J. Beyers (ed.), *S.A. Biografiese Woordeboek, Volume 4* (Durban: Butterworth, 1981).

The growing intolerance towards independent women's organisations also related to important shifts within the Dutch Reformed Church. The 1930s was a time of considerable turmoil in church politics. The suspension of theologian Johannes du Plessis after his trial (by the DRC) in 1930 signalled the disaffection of traditionalist churchmen with a more critical approach to exegeses by a younger group of *predikante*. At the same time, a new faction within the DRC was developing neo-calvinist, fundamentalist views - it was this group that would play an important role in the promotion of Christian Nationalism. These trends towards greater autocracy and rigidity within the church were at the expense of the tradition of evangelical pietism that stretched back to Andrew Murray - the very tradition within which women had been able to claim a space for themselves.

The 1930s was not only a decade of particularly fraught party-political realignments and opposing strands of Afrikaner nationalism, however. Founded in 1918, the all-male *Broederbond* also organised cultural organisations through the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuur Verenigings* (FAK) from the late 1920s. Pelzer has argued that by 1939 the *Broederbond* had 'actively involved itself secretly in every sector of Afrikaner society. It laid the foundations of its organisation that enabled it to get an octopus-like grip, first on Afrikaner nationalism, and later on the government structure itself'.¹⁰⁵ The *Broederbond* also began to exercise influence in the DRC from the 1930s. The change from a loose alignment of nationalist political and cultural organisations to a far more hierarchical and controlled movement probably added to the growing intolerance that highly-placed church officials showed to a women's organisation that insisted on its independent status.¹⁰⁶ If so, this was an indirect process in the 1930s. The *Broederbond* itself was a structure through which different interest groups pursued their goals. A northern, Potchefstroom leadership dominated by the Reformed (Dopper) Church was in ascendancy. Its style and ideological slant differed markedly from that of the Cape nationalist establishment. None of the key opponents of the FVR affiliates are known to have been leading *Broederbond* members in the 1930s. It is also possible that churchmen hostile to the women's organisations represented a grouping within the DRC that felt threatened by *Broederbond* initiatives. Kuschke was a *Broederbonder* - his appointment, so resented by *Armesorg*, may have been

105 Pelzer, *Die Afrikaner Broederbond: Die Eerste Vyftig Jaar*, p.34.

106 For an analysis of the ascendancy of the *Broederbond* in Afrikaner nationalist politics during the 1930s, see O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, pp.59-77. See also T. D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom. Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

supported from within the *Broederbond*.¹⁰⁷ Verwoerd, ever sympathetic to the Federale Vroue Raad, was likewise a member.

To what extent did the FVR achieve the goals proclaimed at the congress of 1933 - to shape social welfare policy in partnership with the state? Time and again, women's private hopes and public statements claimed a role for themselves in matters of policy. By the end of the 1930s several ideas first promoted by the women's organisations had been put into practice. Kuschke's open support of the women's organisations also suggested a shifting balance that favoured women above *predikante*. State officials were now unequivocally convinced of the ACVV's practical skills. In this respect, women's voting power may well have been a factor.

But this was only a partial victory for a leadership which believed that the state should accept female guidance in matters of social welfare policy. FVR members' interaction with state officials reveal the reluctance of the latter to include women in their bureaucracy. It also shows that Afrikaner women who argued for this by claiming a female dominion of social work based on women's particular skills had little success. At the core of the FVR's philosophy remained the notion of separate spheres for men and women, and the essentialist notion of a female, nurturing role. Nationalist men could therefore argue against appointing female officials with wide-ranging functions in terms of a shared discourse, but in order to restrict women's legitimate sphere of action. When the Transvaal FVR representative asked Kuschke if the new regional social welfare officials would be men, he replied in the affirmative:

Mev. Broers: Sou sulke amptenare mans of vrouens wees?

Mnr. Kuschke: Die amptenare sou mans wees.

Mev. Broers: U kan nie voldoende mans kry nie wat op hoogte is van maatskaplike welsyn werk.

Mnr. Kuschke: Ons het baie soorte van werk, nl. behuising, skema vir ondersteuning as behoeftige liggaamlik ongeskikte persone, ens. Baie aspekte van hierdie werk sal beter verrig word deur mans dan deur vrouens...¹⁰⁸

[Mrs. Broers: Would the officials be men or women?

Mr. Kuschke: They would be men.

Mrs. Broers: You can't get men who are informed about social work.

Mr. Kuschke: We have many different kinds of work, namely housing, schemes for supporting physically disabled people, etc. Many aspects of this work will be better managed by men than by women...]

107 Tayler, 'Our Poor': the Politicisation of the Poor White Problem', p.59.

108 ICH, PV229, 2/13/1/1/1, 'Verslag van samespreking ... in die kantoor van die Sekretaris van Volkswelsyn', 30 Nov. 1937.

Conclusion

Although previous accounts of Afrikaner nationalist endeavours to shape state social welfare policy have paid little attention to the activities of the Afrikaans women's welfare organisations, they clearly played a considerable role. Contrary to the hitherto accepted chronicle of events, the *volkskongres* of 1934 was not the first major manifestation of Afrikaner nationalist organisation for a more extensive state-driven social welfare programme. The *Federale Vroue Kongres* of the previous year, organised by the four Afrikaans women's welfare organisations, made the 'poor white question' front page news, and prompted male Afrikaner nationalists to place a *volkskongres* on their agenda. FVR affiliates participated in this event, and plans mooted by the women in 1933 substantially informed the recommendations of the *volkskongres* and the activities of its continuation committee. As H.C. Lambrechts - a close observer of events - has argued of the establishment of an independent Department of Social Welfare, 'die ACVV het dit bewerkstellig, het daarvoor gepleit' [the ACVV brought it about, pleaded for it].¹⁰⁹ Rothmann herself believed that Afrikaans women played a major role in the shaping of 'openbare mening waardeur so 'n departement [van Volkswelsyn] tot stand gekom het' ['public opinion through which a department of Social Welfare came into being'].¹¹⁰

Female Afrikaner nationalists certainly contributed not only to propaganda urging action on the poor white question, but also to the ascendance of 'socio-scientific' programmes for its solution. This was surely because social scientists were lending new credence to areas of women's philanthropic work, redefined as 'family welfare'. Rothmann and her colleagues envisaged a state policy that placed less emphasis on efforts to alleviate male unemployment, and supported family-centred (and therefore female-centred) social work. They combined a belief in the superiority of 'scientific' and professional approaches with a strong conviction of women's particular role in the field of 'family welfare'.

109 Interview with Lambrechts. Lambrechts was associated with the ACVV from the mid-thirties and was organising secretary from 1939. She wrote an academic treatise on the ACVV's social work, 'Die Eerste Vyftig jaar - die Ontwikkeling van die Werk van die Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging' (Ph.D., University of Stellenbosch, 1957). Her research elicited valuable letters from Rothmann on the ACVV's relationship with church and state.

110 Rothmann, 'Het Vroue ons Wetgewing Beïnvloed?', *Die Huisgenoot*, 18 May 1951, p.53. Rothmann argued that the few women who entered party politics during the 1930s and attempted to shape 'sosiale wetgewing' ['social legislation'] made very little impact. Mabel Malherbe, editor of the 1920s magazine *Die Boerevrou*, became a member of parliament soon after white women could vote.

In this respect, comparison with the projects of maternalist reformers elsewhere is interesting. As Sonya Michel has argued, 'waged labor for mothers was a decisive fault line in social-policy matters'.¹¹¹ Many, but by no means all, maternalists in the United States and elsewhere advocated social welfare policies that did not support working mothers. As Virginia Sapiro has noted, most social welfare policies have been designed to benefit women as wives and mothers - caretakers of men, children and old people.¹¹² The ACVV likewise advocated state support for social welfare programmes that assumed men to be the breadwinner and women to be nurturers at home.

By the end of the decade, key recommendations of the two congresses had been executed, including the formation of a new department and a system of state subsidies for nurses and social workers. But the FVR's more ambitious plans to influence the shaping of state social-welfare policy and local social welfare structures were thwarted by a reluctant administration and a vociferously oppositional church. For several years, programmes for the rural welfare councils presented to the state by the ACVV met with little response from state departments apparently more sympathetic the plans of the male-dominated church. From about 1937 the Department of Social Welfare was more sympathetic to the new social welfare philosophies and accepted women's practical contribution, but did not take their policy recommendations seriously.

Comparison with maternalist projects in other countries may also help explain why the FVR had such limited success. Maternalism - that protean term referring to programmes of wide-ranging political intent - shaped welfare states to varying degrees. Feminist scholars have argued that in countries where centralised state bureaucracies initiated and controlled social welfare efforts, female pronatalists were least effective in influencing social welfare policy. In the United States, the 'shadow bureaucracy' created by women's associations, whose influence extended beyond programmes aimed specifically at mothers and children (to labour legislation more generally), flourished in the context of minimal state involvement in welfare. In countries like Germany and France, a strong state presence and a maternalist politics driven by men limited women's influence.¹¹³ Afrikaner women's new interest in

111 Michel, 'The Limits of Maternalism', p.277.

112 Virginia Sapiro, 'The Gender Basis of American Social Policy', in Gordon, *Women, the State and Welfare*, p.45. See also Linda Gordon's discussion in her introduction to the same volume of the need to confront female reformers' contribution to the making of policies that discriminated against women.

directly influencing state policy was prompted by male politicians' strong focus on the 'poor white question' and issues of *volksgesondheid*. FVR leaders were themselves promoters of state involvement in social welfare, but the state's entry into this area, together with the heightened interest of Afrikaner nationalist men, clearly limited the success of the women's ventures.

White, middle-class maternalists in the United States of the 1910s and 1920s had to some extent been able to 'transfer their programs to the state, becoming administrators of new state agencies dedicated to maternal and child welfare'. They spoke on behalf of white women: black women benefited little from the emerging welfare state, and black activists did not have access to power that hinged on class as well as race.¹¹⁴ Afrikaner women certainly believed that they should have special access to state officials. Rothmann's rejection of the former's treatment as *volkies* reflected a deeply held conviction that as whites and as Afrikaners, FVR women should be able to go to 'ons mense' ['our people'] in the state with their programmes for the good of the *volk*. It also showed her unquestioning acceptance that blacks were denied this access. But if she had previously hoped that Afrikaner men in the state and church would receive their kinswomen with respect and seriously consider their suggestions, events of the 1930s must have sobered her considerably. Even the Minister of Social Welfare, Kuschke, was only prepared to accept women's practical expertise on a local level by the end of the decade. However, the decision to subsidise social workers employed by FVR affiliates was in itself an indication that the state was prioritising 'family welfare' to a greater extent than before - hence its support for the policies advocated by the Afrikaans women's organisations

Countries like the United States, where middle-class women's associations exerted most influence, were rapidly industrialising societies with a substantial middle-class, where opportunities for education, entry into the professions and even into the state bureaucracy

113 In their introduction to *Mothers of a New World*, Koven and Michel argue that in Germany, where strong state welfare measures were already introduced by a male-controlled bureaucracy in the nineteenth century, women had minimal influence. In France and Britain, women's welfare organisations acted as 'auxiliaries of the state as they were called upon to help administer maternal and child-welfare measures' (p.21). In the same volume, Alisa Klaus's essay 'Depopulation and Race Suicide: Maternalism and Pronatalist Ideologies in France and the United States' provides useful comparative material. Klaus explains that French women's relative lack of influence has been linked to male nationalist politicians' obsession with declining birthrates: 'pronatalism was essentially a male-defined, male-controlled ideology' (p.189). Klaus also argues that French women lacked the institutional and political power to shape policy because of government centralisation, bureaucracy and institutional structures (including those of the Catholic church) that acted as obstacles to professional education and employment.

114 Eileen Boris, 'The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the 'Political'', in Koven and Michel, *Mothers of a New World*, p.215.

were relatively open to white women. In South Africa, with its comparatively small white middle-class, women's organisations - split along linguistic lines - could arguably not hope to achieve a similar range of skills amongst its activists, or the power to lobby and pressurise government. American women had entered state bureaucracies and forged links between them and independent voluntary associations. The occasional attempts made by the ACVV to have female officials appointed had little success. At best, a few women were appointed to advisory councils and boards. From this relatively weak position, the ACVV's requests to state officials to heed women's plans for 'family' social welfare were also not entirely successful.

This account of the interaction between women's organisations, state and church on matters of social welfare policy underlines the importance of analysing the gender dynamics at the centre of Afrikaner nationalist politics. Evidently, fissures of distrust, struggles for positions of power and attempts to forge alliances with state departments ran beyond party-political lines during the 1930s. Nationalist *broeders* and *susters* differed about the extent to which women should act independently within the movement, and about how much political influence they should have. The women who headed the ACVV and its sister organisations were convinced that they could, and should, contribute substantially to state social welfare policy. Afrikaner men held somewhat varied opinions on women's role in social welfare. Influential social scientists and (by the end of the 1930s) some state officials identified them as useful allies. However, powerful men in the DRC were not prepared to accept women's organisations as equal and self-governing partners.

Throughout this conflict, the ACVV held to the slogan it had chosen in the first year of its existence: these were women dedicated to the *volk*, its language and its church. But the leaders of the Afrikaans women's organisations wanted to work independently of male control. Their determined opposition to *Armesorg* schemes refutes previous, stereotyped portrayals of passive *volksmoeders* who unquestioningly accepted male control.

Conclusion

Every few years, the women who came together as ACVV members posed for a visual record of the moment. A picture from 1906 shows congress delegates in the solemnly elaborate dress and ostentatious hats that marked important occasions (*plate 4*). In a photograph from *De Goede Hoop* of 1910 (*plate 5*), some thirty delegates to another ACVV congress are crowded together on the steps of what seems to be a church. A more unusual photograph, sent to *De Goede Hoop* in 1914 (*plate 7*), presents four generations of women from the same Karoo town family. All have rosettes that proclaim ACVV membership. None are wearing the dangerous *hedendaagse modes* (modern fashions). In a snapshot of the 1920s executive (*plate 17*), Roome has the contemplative, level gaze becoming in a minister's wife. Rothmann demonstrates her disregard for fashion with a particularly shapeless hat and sagging stockings. Geyer has a confident expression that matches her trim head-gear and smart fur stole. A picture from *Die Burger* shows a group of delegates to the *Federale Vroue Kongres* in 1933 (*plate 26*). The occasion is their pilgrimage to the *Vrouemonument* in Bloemfontein.

Although modern-day viewers will notice that as the years pass, the women wear less restrictive dress, they may well dismiss them as personifications of small-town, Afrikaner conservatism. One may imagine them (still wearing those hats?) laboriously filling in minute books. Or having tea, and stitching a tapestry destined for the museum at the *Voortrekkermonument*. But how could they possibly be movers in South African history?

However, as I have argued in this thesis, female 'conservatism' is itself worthwhile of exploration. Indeed, a close reading of the minute books shows that appearances can be deceptive, and warrants a more careful scrutiny.

In Chapter One, I showed that the apparent silence of white, Dutch-Afrikaans women in the Cape Colony during the late nineteenth century belied important changes in the lives of many reasonably well-off farmers' daughters and village girls. Yes, women were absent from Dutch-Afrikaans ethnic political movements in the western Cape, and S.J. du Toit's circle of cultural nationalists did not include female writers or poets. A visiting card from the 1870s carries a picture of domestic solicitude - a mother gently bends over her infant, the centre of her attention (*plate 1*). But compare the photograph of Huguenot Seminary graduates, taken in c.1878 (*plate 2*). By the late 1870s, a number of towns boasted seminaries for girls, run and staffed by women. Civil institutions in the colony were no longer entirely dominated by men. Moreover, while the church hierarchy was still wholly male, evangelical Protestantism had provided women with new opportunities for greater involvement in religious life. Many Dutch-Afrikaans women were now actively participating

in prayer circles, and a mission support organisation of their own making. Although most women opted for marriage and children, many were teachers before they became wives. A significant minority remained single, and established independent careers as teachers and missionaries.

It was also during the 1870s that Dutch religious journals began specifically to address women readers. The picture on the visiting card may well have been a visual counterpart of the discourse now constructed by Dutch Reformed Church ministers (as well as a more general Victorian celebration of female domesticity). At a time when Dutch-Afrikaans women could train to be teachers and missionaries, evangelical Protestant print culture celebrated motherhood as the only destiny for women. It was as mothers and at home that women were to live out their evangelical fervour and exercise their moral powers. While this idealised and restrictive emphasis on motherhood included occasional acknowledgement and even approval of women taking on new roles, these were for the most part cast as extensions of maternal duties. The new possibilities for women and their greater visibility in religious life were also the context for churchmen's careful explanations that male authority and female subservience in the family were sanctioned by God.

This was the world that had shaped the minds of the women in that first picture of the ZACVV. It was in the seminaries and religious associations of the late nineteenth century that many female orators of the protest meetings in 1900 honed their skills. Indeed, many ACVV founder members were also veterans of the war-time protests. Their speeches had demonstrated familiarity with current political issues. If Dutch-Afrikaans women had never participated in formal politics or the construction of nineteenth century cultural nationalism, they were certainly well versed in popular histories of the Boer republics, and skilfully negotiated the discourse of colonial nationalism.

As they and their menfolk well knew, their actions also represented a significant departure from traditional gender roles. For the first time, large numbers of Dutch-Afrikaans women from the Colony participated, indeed took the lead, in overtly political protests, thus claiming a public, political space for themselves. Even so, the women themselves emphasised the specific limits of their protest: this was extraordinary action in extraordinary times, taken by 'mothers' and 'daughters'. *De stem der vrouw* was heard at women's gatherings, and speakers did not fundamentally challenge a social order that posited separate spheres for men and women.

Almost every delegate in the ACVV congress photographs had journeyed from a different village or town in the Cape province. In Chapter Two, I explored the growing network of

local women's organisations first established in 1904. An important theme was continuity with past constructions of political identity, yet there were also significant changes in the discourse articulated by ACVV leaders - changes that also emphasise the diversity of 'Afrikaner nationalisms' at this time. ACVV women who had articulated political loyalties in the language of colonial nationalism now opposed erstwhile comrades from the war-time conciliation movement, as well as Afrikaans women from the Free State and Transvaal, by insisting on a narrowly circumscribed definition of the *volk*. Prominent Afrikaans politicians favoured a white South African nationhood that included English-speakers. But like some western Cape DRC ministers, ACVV leadership promoted an 'imagined community' defined not only by skin colour but also by language and religious affiliation.

From the beginning, the day-to-day work of ACVV branches involved caring for the local white, Afrikaans poor. In the context of post-war devastation and rural impoverishment, ACVV leadership fused Christian charity with nationalist mission. At a time when education was seen as a major antidote for poverty, ACVV women funded poor children's schooling. Through their *huishoudskole*, the organisation also specifically sought to provide girls from impoverished families with an education they deemed appropriate.

For approximately the first fifteen years of the organisation's existence, ACVV leaders also placed a strong emphasis on the promotion of cultural nationalism. Many leading ACVV members had been educated in English medium schools but were now campaigning for the *taal*. It was in ACVV women's discussions about language that strong links between nineteenth century idealisations of motherhood and the construction of a gendered, ethnicised identity were evident. Their promotion of *volk*, *kerk en taal* involved a subtle transformation of the older, religious notions of maternal duty. While some still explained women's role purely in the language of evangelical Protestantism, a growing number of women called upon mothers to teach their children prayers in the *moedertaal*, to build an Afrikaans *volk*. The first generation of ACVV members was therefore not simply the recipient of a male-constructed discourse about women's role. These women actively participated in the blending of older notions of maternal piety with ideas about women's duties to the *volk*.

Some six years after the war, Afrikaner nationalist men also began to incorporate images of women into popular Afrikaans culture. For the first time a conscious attempt was made to construct a public identity for women that proclaimed their membership of the *volk*. This was surely in response to women's own promotion of *taal*, *kerk en volk*. But while women were proving active participants in the construction and promotion of nationalist ideas, the

discourse of male cultural entrepreneurs made of them objects rather than subjects, icons of war-time suffering. Comparison between the Cape and the interior provinces also suggests regional differences in the early development of *volksmoeder* discourse. In the Cape, a strong tradition of evangelical Protestantism was facilitating the construction of a nationalist discourse of maternal duty. In the Transvaal, a discourse that specifically politicised and ethnicised motherhood was not readily apparent at the time of the inauguration of the *vrouemonument* in 1913. However, by the late 1910s a coherent *volksmoeder* discourse was articulated in Afrikaans cultural magazines and books.

The ACVV delegates' matronly appearance in the first two photographs was also in keeping with the image that leadership presented to Dutch-Afrikaans society. Look more carefully at the picture from 1914. Victoria West president Johanna Claassens (Huguenot graduate) and her mother both wear sombre black dresses; the latter holds what is surely the reading material of an exemplary Christian. The other women are attired in less cumbersome clothing - at the centre, the fourth generation symbolises hope and youth with a white confirmation dress, ribbons and delicate greenery.

The three older women were self-proclaimed moral guardians who identified strongly with the notions of Christian, maternal piety and moral responsibility for the family that were first promoted in Dutch church publications from the late nineteenth century. In keeping with the ACVV's mission, they surround the young and innocent daughter of the house. ACVV women were certainly often formidable upholders of 'morality'. Moreover, in their eyes moral duties were no longer confined to the privacy of individual households. ACVV congresses were publicized events, and members' ritual confirmations of themselves as moral guardians involved public proclamations. Branches did not only do house visits and organise bazaars. They organised concerts for the general public and competitions for schools. The ACVV's duties to the *volk* also involved public political action that called for changes in government policy, as evidenced in petitions about the status of the Dutch language.

If the modern viewer was inclined to dismiss ACVV delegates as conservatives, this was certainly how many would have wanted to be seen. The advent of militant suffragism in England, and the founding of pro-suffrage organisations in South Africa, unleashed vigorous debate about whether and how women should take action in the public sphere. Ever since Afrikaans women began to organise themselves, churchmen and nationalist (male) politicians had reminded females of their proper place as house-mothers; now their warnings became more pointed and urgent. ACVV leaders carefully distanced themselves from the New Women who supported suffrage and threatened male authority. But they none-the-less

defended their departure from 'traditions' confining women to the home, and asserted their presence in the public sphere. Moreover, ACVV leadership consistently ignored suggestions that the organisation should relinquish its independent status vis-a-vis the male-controlled Dutch Reformed Church.

In anticipation of the ACVV's stronger focus on social welfare from the 1920s, Chapter Three investigated the working lives of the Cape's white, Afrikaans rural poor and working-class women. Through life histories collected by myself in the early 1990s and by Rothmann in the late 1920s, and using material from state and church archives, I explored some of the gender roles and expectations that shaped white Afrikaans women's lives. No contemporary historian has yet attempted to reconstruct the experiences of marginal, white Afrikaans-speaking women in the rural Cape, and their urban counterparts have scarcely received more attention. The narrative woven out of Rothmann's notes and my own recordings rendered several female voices into print, conveying some of the texture of their lives, the emotional significance of their memories, and allowed women to speak - at least a little - for themselves. Instead of creating a 'seamless' narrative, I also examined issues of 'subjectivity' inherent in oral history research and writing - where the interviewer-author is intimately involved in both the construction of the personal narrative that emerges during an interview and the final, authoritative 'history' that she produces.

My information on rural women's lives revises standard views of poor white women's domestic and working lives. A significant finding was that (lack of) access to land crucially determined gendered work allocation within families. Survival strategies often involved harnessing all available familial labour. Many *bywoner* and *trekboer* daughters whose families struggled to survive on farms in the Cape worked on the land, and even during the 1930s girls and married women from poor rural families did heavy *manswerk*. But class position was also a crucial determinant of the circumstances of women's reproductive labour. I showed that many women from families who owned no land and led the precarious life of sharecroppers and nomadic stock farmers employed 'lay' midwives. In this respect, I also explored *platteland* attitudes towards birth attendants. In regions where 'old women' were trusted, or professional doctors only called during emergencies, this was often a matter of preference or expediency, even for townswomen and farmer's wives. However, the poorest, most marginalised and isolated women could not afford 'lay' help or rely on family networks and gave birth alone.

Levels of rural dispossession and access to land also helped shape the possibilities for young women when they first arrived in Cape Town. Some came with their families, many came

on their own and lodged with friends or relatives. When no capital was available to buy land or property, siblings and parents pooled resources to survive. In working-class homes, gendered work division meant sharing out domestic work amongst female siblings, while young women also contributed to their family's survival through work in factories or offices.

In my analysis of the life-history interviews, I tried to move beyond (in Joan Scott's phrase) 'making experience visible', to exploring whether and how 'race', language, religion and politics shaped senses of identity. My analysis acknowledged the difficulty of distinguishing between erstwhile attitudes and those shaped by subsequent political and cultural events, but showed that careful questioning can sometimes trace changing attitudes. Moreover, interviewees' unsolicited references to race and religion provided important clues to aspects of community and identity. A strong sense of religious community featured large in many accounts, but the women interviewed did not always claim allegiance to the DRC. Most distinguished carefully between their own threadbare but respectable lives and those of poor whites. While they asserted self-sufficiency, subsidised housing was clearly not equated with charitable handouts. For others, the ACVV's philanthropy was an important and unproblematic part of making ends meet.

Some women asserted their loyalty to the National Party, but attitudes to language indicate the fluidity of urban cultural identity during these decades. Those who arrived in Cape Town as young women commented on the necessity of learning English, but few women articulated a sense of identity centered on Afrikaans. Indeed, only the daughters of erstwhile landowners remembered that their families were consumers of Afrikaans print culture.

This was the context for the ACVV's work during the 1920s and 1930s, and in Chapter Four I turned to the projects launched by the middle-class, female Afrikaner nationalists photographed in c.1928. The modern onlooker who knows something about the ideas and activities of these *hoofbestuur* members will take especial note of their business-like dress and self-assured stance. Indeed, this was the decade in which a number of assertive women made their mark in Afrikaans print culture, and took a prominent part in the construction of a gendered Afrikaner identity. Rothmann's *Vrouesake* column demonstrated a close overlap between the work of the new Nasionale Vroue Party and ACVV activities. Rothmann, who rapidly gained influence in the ACVV, claimed a range of issues as 'Vrouesake' in *Die Burger* and an explicitly political role for Afrikaner women. Together with other women writers and journalists, she helped construct the discourse that cast Afrikaner women as mothers of the nation. Like their contemporaries in Europe and north America, they

articulated a maternalist discourse that claimed an active political role for women in the 'household of the state'. Rothmann and her journalist colleagues also contributed to the construction of a *volksmoeder* discourse that recast women's domestic duties as essential services to the *volk*. Together with their explanation that the state was a household in need of 'a woman's hand' to put it right, this amounted to a redefinition of the 'political' and a blurring of 'public' and 'private' spheres. Moreover, Rothmann demonstrated an exceptionally sharp eye for the gender dynamics of nationalist politics. If Afrikaner nationalist men were more accepting of women's active political participation by the 1920s, Rothmann was also wont to assess critically the extent of their acceptance of women as equal partners.

But this chapter also moved beyond the ideas of ACVV leaders to study the ACVVs rural members. Rothmann's journeys in the northern and north-western Cape showed that in areas where market production was rudimentary, many ACVV members were themselves poor and joined the ACVV in an attempt to help themselves.

For the most part, rural ACVVs carried on their long-established routines of helping poor whites. In the context of a general focus on white children's education from state and church alike, the provision of education remained an important aspect the ACVV's philanthropic work. By the 1920s, branches were sending children to a network of state-subsidised school hostels established by the DRC and sometimes run by ACVV women. The ACVV's own *huishoudskole* could now receive girls committed to the care of the state by magistrates - the organisation therefore had more power to remove girls from 'unsuitable' homes to the controlled environment of the *huishoudskole*. Here, girls were still taught to be housekeepers and acquired the skills of motherhood. In theory, they were also drawn into the community of the *volk* and fashioned into Afrikaners by women who denied the existence of class difference. But ironically for an ACVV leadership that wanted to deny the importance of class, these efforts were often thwarted by matrons who had themselves not absorbed middle-class education and values.

My work also suggested the limited impact of nationalist discourse in the more economically backward regions of the Cape. Although some teachers' wives and *domineesvroue* pursued consciously nationalist goals, northern ACVVs were often practically unchanged extensions of church based networks of women. Older, religious and regionally circumscribed notions of community persisted, and the ACVV's policy of ethnic-specific philanthropy was not always followed.

Even so, the organisation made more middle-class Afrikaners think of struggling farmers and *bywoners* and wage-workers as members of the *volk*. Moreover, the ACVV's practice of targeting white Afrikaans-speakers for help may well have contributed to a transformation of the image that poor, Afrikaans-speaking whites had of themselves. Women's philanthropic activities, centered on the private sphere of the family, and state policies of resource distribution in the public arena, combined to reinforce racial identities. If they did not target such families with explicit nationalist propaganda, they drew women into female support networks that had close connections with the Dutch Reformed Church. This was a process that (as I showed in Chapter Five) continued during the 1930s.

Chapter Four also demonstrated that it was in the industrialising centres that the struggle to mould Afrikaans-speaking whites into race-conscious Afrikaners was waged with urgency and consistency. For Cape Town's ACVV leadership, the ACVV signified a Cape-wide, Afrikaner *susterskap*. From the early 1920s, a new awareness of the growing numbers of white Afrikaans poor gave new impetus to its philanthropy. It was especially in the city that the 'womanly' work of charity was executed together with the political intent of ethnic nationalists. ACVV leadership combined traditionally female philanthropy conducted in the privacy of homes, with public campaigns in the Afrikaans press. As columnist for *Die Burger* and leading member of the ACVV and NVP, Rothmann was pivotal to this development. By 1926, the branch was highlighting the negative effect of mixed race neighbourhoods, and initiating publicity campaigns on slum conditions in the city.

The efforts of cultural nationalists to imbue domestic and maternal tasks with political meaning had gained considerable momentum by the early 1920s. Rothmann's redefinition of the private sphere included campaigning against men's downgrading of women's work. But her efforts to have women's work experience made visible and valued were always with specific nationalist intent. For her, the *volk's* survival depended on the creation of a respectable, consciously white, working class. In spite of young Afrikaans women's rejection of earning through domestic work, this remained the ideal working girl's job for Afrikaner nationalists. But from 1925, Cape Town's ACVV women also argued that Afrikaner nationalists must confront the fact of Afrikaans female factory workers, publicised their working conditions, and highlighted the fact that coloured and white women often worked alongside each other.

In Chapter Five I traced the evolution of the ACVV's social work projects from the late 1920s to 1938. I showed that during the depression of the early 1930s and beyond, rural and urban branches continued to extend help to those they deemed members of the *volk*. The ACVV's continued support for cultural nationalism incorporated some changes. In the first

years of the ACVV's existence, members had been encouraged to initiate projects that promoted the *taal* and popularised versions of Afrikaner history. With the ascendancy of FAK and the centralisation of cultural nationalism as the Broederbond gained influence, these more or less spontaneous presentations of Afrikaner culture declined. But the ACVV's own strong emphasis on social welfare included a drive to promote Afrikaans books in rural schools, and to encourage the support of Afrikaner print culture amongst *platteland* Afrikaans speakers.

I also examined the projects for factory women launched by Cape Town's ACVV (and in larger rural towns by the end of the 1930s). Residential segregation was a distant ideal, but the *vereeniging* could make a beginning by providing the young, white Afrikaans women who worked in Cape Town's factories with proper lodging and supervision. At the Salt River hostel, the ACVV combined a measure of security for single, female wage-earners with an environment calculated to draw them into the community of the *volk*. Their social clubs for *fabrieksmeisies* likewise sought to mould workers into Afrikaners. A crèche reflected not only a recognition of the needs of working mothers, but represented another attempt by the ACVV to counteract the effects of mixed-race neighbourhoods on 'Afrikaner' children.

From the early 1930s, rural and urban ACVVs alike were also helping to provide segregated housing for the poor. ACVV women were involved in public housing projects that promoted systematic residential segregation between in Cape Town. Key members of the Utility Company that built sub-economic housing for poor whites belonged to the ACVV, and the two organisations worked closely together in order to place genuinely 'white' workers in the new, racially pure environment.

Towards the end of the decade, an overall change to advocating legislative solutions to the 'problems' identified by Afrikaner nationalists was also apparent. Thus ACVV women's efforts to promote racial segregation now incorporated demands for state intervention. Legislation that specified separate residential areas was necessary for the creation of a consciously white working class. Encouraged by *hoofbestuur*, rural ACVVs also participated in this campaign.

In the context of intense campaigning by the *Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party*, they supported the criminalising of mixed marriages in 1938. The organisation's efforts to prevent *skadelike volksvoorplanting* also focused on *moeilike meisies* - young women who were sexually 'irresponsible' and whose amoral behaviour threatened the purity of the *volk*. Here too, a

legislative solution was favoured. Women with wayward sexual urges did not only require specialised institutions, but also had to be forcibly sterilised.

Against such crude manifestations of nationalism, Rothmann's maternity care project seems more complex, although geared to the same end. In the *Volksgeondheid* campaigns of the 1920s, male Afrikaner nationalists had identified child mortality as a problem that merited state funding, and suggested this was a *vrouesaak* where women's ignorance was the problem and female nationalists could offer advice and education. From the end of the 1920s, the ACVV gave a different emphasis to its rural health project. Rothmann's intense sympathy for impoverished women fuelled her maternity care scheme. But women's reproductive needs also merited attention because they were central to the production of a healthy *volk*. Efforts to reconstruct poor Afrikaner families had to centre on *armmoeders*. Rothmann saw maternity care clinics as potential sites where educated Afrikaner nurses could inculcate women with a sense of their own worth, and provide mothers with valuable instruction. A major theme underlying many feminist histories of birth management has been that of control. But they have mostly described the decline of female, 'lay' midwifery and the ascendancy of medical men. Rothmann's project represented a peculiar twist in the South African version of this 'reproductive takeover'. It involved a crucial change in the social relationship between parturient women and birth attendants, in which women who had absorbed middle-class and nationalist notions of women's place in society took over control from 'lay' midwives.

In Chapter Six I moved from the particulars of the ACVV's social work practice to focus on areas of conflict between Afrikaner nationalist men and women. The ideas and actions of 'conservative' women were certainly contrary to stereotypes of acquiescent females. In the picture from 1933 (*plate 26*), politically active Afrikaner women took centre stage. These were women poised to claim a partnership with church and state. The *Federale Vroue Kongres* of 1933 was indicative of a new confidence and resolve on the part female Afrikaner nationalists. Rothmann's newspaper column of the 1920s had often demonstrated an avid interest in the extent to which women in other countries were able to influence social policy and shape legislation. Afrikaner women were now ready to try out their own ideas in this respect. In part, this related to their acquisition of suffrage in 1930. This had not in itself been very significant in maternalist politics elsewhere,¹ but female Afrikaner nationalists believed that their newly acquired voting rights would add weight to their efforts to influence national social welfare policy. While SAVF leader Mabel Malherbe moved

¹ Suffrage per se was not a decisive turning point in the history of maternalist politics. S. Koven and S. Michel, 'Introduction: "Motherworlds"', in S. Koven and S. Michel (eds), *Mothers of a New World* (New York: Routledge 1993), p.3.

directly into the political arena by standing for parliament, Rothmann and her colleagues meant to use the organisational base of the women's welfare organisations in order to shape social welfare policy.

They also launched such efforts at this time because the hitherto largely female domain of welfare was increasingly targeted as politically important by male politicians, church and state officials. From the mid-1920s, nationalist men had already campaigned around *volksgesondheid*. By the end of the decade, provincial administrations were supporting racially exclusive programmes for children's nutrition and the combating of infant mortality. Politicians pointed to women's special duties in this area, and administrators welcomed their willingness to participate in these schemes. But in the eyes of leading members of the women's organisations, the projects funded by the government did not necessarily include the interests of the mothers themselves. For example, they did not include plans for improved maternity care on the *platteland*. Moreover, the social welfare schemes espoused by state and church did not privilege the familial sphere, but focused on the provision of employment. Afrikaner women, promoting the 'traditional' family, never questioned that such employment schemes should focus on men and that family welfare was women's sphere. But while these ACVV women and their northern colleagues gave considerable weight to calls for more state involvement in social welfare, they wanted this to happen on their terms.

Their plans were publicised at the *Federale Vroue Kongres*, where they presented ideas about a range of subjects relating to social work. Most ambitious amongst these was a scheme for the co-ordination of all social work directed at rural poor whites. The scheme envisaged cooperation between the various tiers of government, church bodies, local professionals and the Afrikaans women's welfare organisations. ACVV women clearly assumed that 'family' social work was their dominion, and that in this regard women should take the lead in shaping state welfare policy. They were also convinced that the state-subsidised projects needed to resolve the 'poor white problem' had to give priority to this female-centred approach to 'family' welfare work, instead of concentrating on work provision for men. For them, an alliance with social scientists such as Verwoerd held undoubted appeal because they emphasised the importance of social work whilst apparently acknowledging the expertise of the charitable women's organisations.

Agitation by female Afrikaner nationalists in the early 1930s certainly precipitated action around the 'poor white question' by Afrikaner men. FVR representatives contributed substantially to the *Volkskongres* of 1934, where key ideas first mooted at the *Federale Vroue Kongres* were accepted. This was the year when Rothmann thought she saw glimpses

of heaven - a place where women's advice would carry weight. But by the end of the decade, she and her colleagues had only achieved some of their aims. They could claim considerable credit for the establishment of a separate welfare department. Social workers were beginning to be subsidised - this had been a key recommendation of the women's organisations. However, state officials like Kuschke valued women as practical workers, and did not take them seriously at the level of state policy. The rural co-ordinating councils envisaged by the FVR had also not been established.

Comparative perspectives offer some explanations for the women's limited success. In countries where the state was minimally involved in social welfare, women were able to exert greater influence on social welfare policy. Where male politicians and state officials identified social welfare as an issue of crucial political importance, women were less influential. At first, social welfare was largely female territory - in Rothmann's words, women walked here long before 'die mans en regeringskantore' ['the men and the government departments']. In South Africa of the 1930s, the 'poor white problem' was a matter of urgency for Afrikaner nationalists. ACVV leaders (allied with academics), and men from the church and government departments vied with each other to have their particular solution become state policy. In the face of indifference and opposition from a number of powerfully placed nationalist men, the women's organisations could not achieve all their aims.

The Dutch Reformed Church's efforts to curb the independence of the women's organisations was perhaps the major obstacle to the realisation of their plans. This conflict raises interesting questions with regards to gender dynamics in Afrikaner nationalism. The ACVV's founders had established an organisation that maintained a close public alliance with the DRC, and on a practical level this Christian organisation was closely allied to local churches. However, from the beginning the ACVV's finances and structures were entirely independent of the DRC. For some three decades, this status was rarely made explicit. As the 'poor white question' moved into the centre of Afrikaner nationalist politics, DRC men tried to claim the field of social work for themselves. More specifically, they tried to claim the women as subordinate workers for a church controlled by men. The determined resistance of the ACVV showed the extent to which its leaders valued an organisation that was free from male control.

In my introduction I objected to the ways in which Afrikaner women have hitherto been described in comparative studies. So how should Afrikaner women of this period (c.1900 -

1939) be entered into international debates about gender and nationalism? This study of women practising selective philanthropy, teaching working-class whites the value of residential segregation and calling for legislation against 'racially mixed' marriages calls Curthoys's discussion of white women's history in Australia to mind: 'When we try to relate feminist questions of agency and empowerment to questions of race, the notion of agency can take on ambivalent meanings...'² Curthoys argues that in colonial contexts, white women's exercising of their agency often contributed to the oppression and dispossession of the colonised:

Feminist investigations of national identity in Australia and similar societies will find the history of dispossession, exploitation, racism and segregation to be fundamental, not peripheral to their project. In doing so, they will need to revise an assumption which lies at the heart of much feminist scholarship - the historical innocence of women'.³

But the way in which Rothmann emerges in this study certainly makes apparent the complex nature of women's active participation in ethnically exclusive nationalism. This ardent Afrikaner nationalist supported racist measures that promoted the interest of the *volk*. Intertwined with such efforts was her intense sympathy for (white) women, and acute observations on gender inequalities amongst 'Afrikaners'. These aspects of her 'agency' nudge at simplistic delineations of 'conservatism' and suggest similar explorations of women outside of this particular nationalism.

Rothmann was also not an isolated figure. The ACVV's leaders were not passive recipients of a male-constructed nationalism, but women who themselves constructed nationalist discourse according to their particular ideas of gender roles. These were women who affirmed the notion of 'separate spheres', yet redefined 'public' and 'private' spaces to accommodate their own political activities. They were also women who were convinced that they could only contribute to Afrikaner nationalism while their organisations remained independent from male control. This points to a little explored area of nationalism in South Africa and elsewhere, conflict between men and women about women's sphere of action, and their degree of independence within 'patriarchal' societies.

Speculating on 'die vrou van die toekoms' ['the woman of the future'] in 1927, Rothmann had predicted the advent of an era when Afrikaner men and women would be equal partners (of course, she was accepting of other, unequal relationships that would be maintained in

² Anne Curthoys, 'Identity crisis: colonialism, Nationalism and gender in Australian History', *Gender and History* 5, 2 (1993), p.170.

³ *Ibid.*, p.170.

pursuit of Afrikaner nationalist aims). In the past women had accepted 'die ondergeskikte posisie wat die man op haar afgedwing het' [the subordinate position that man had forced upon her']:

Vandag is ons nog nie so ver van daardie stadium af soos ons dink nie. Tog gee dit 'n verkeerde toestand af, omdat dit op iets vals rus, nl. dat die vrou nie eweveel vir die samelewing beteken as die man nie, en dat haar werk minder werd is as syne. Ons vrouens moet werk om die waarheid te laat seëvier, en die nuwe wereld sal deur die vrou van die toekoms gemaak word na die seëviering, wat seker en gewis sal kom...⁴

[Today we are not yet as far removed from that stage as we think. This does give rise to a problematic state of affairs, because it rests on a false premise, namely that woman does not contribute as much to society as man, that her work is worth less than his. We women must work so that the truth triumphs, and the new world will be made by the woman of the future after the victory, which will certainly come...]

For a brief moment in 1934, Rothmann thought her heaven of equality between the sexes was within reach. This turned out to be a mirage. Nevertheless, ACVV women proved themselves able and assertive opponents of Afrikaner nationalist *broeders* who wanted to have (as my grandmother put it) 'als onder die mans' ['everything under the men'].

⁴ *Die Burger*, 'Die Vrou van die Toekoms', 11 Jan. 1927.

Bibliography

This Bibliography has been divided into:

I. Manuscript Sources

1. Central Archives depot
2. Transvaal Archives depot
3. Cape Archives depot
- 4.. University of Stellenbosch Document Centre
5. University of the Orange Free State, Institute for Contemporary History
6. Documents in possession of the Cradock and Upington ACVV offices

II. Printed Primary Sources

1. Official records
2. Newspapers and periodicals

III. Printed Books and Pamphlets (published before 1940)

IV. Secondary Sources (published after 1940)

1. Selected Books
2. Selected articles and chapters in books
3. Unpublished articles and theses
4. Pamphlets

V. Interviews Cited in the Text

VI. Illustrations

I. Manuscript Sources

1. Central Archives Depot, Pretoria (PTA)

Archives of the Health Department (GES)

Archives of the Justice Department (JUS)

Archives of the Agriculture Department (LDB)

Archives of the Lands Department (LDE)

Archives of the Social Welfare and Pensions Department (VWN)

Evidence to the Commission of Inquiry on Mixed Marriages, 1938-1939 (K48)

2. Transvaal Archives Depot (TA)

Gustav Preller Private Collection (A787)

3. Cape Archives Depot (CA)

- a) Archives of the Magistrate, Springbok (1/SBK)
- b) Archives of the Magistrate, Tulbagh (1/TBH)
- c) ACVV Private Collection (A1953)
- d) Archives of the Dutch Reformed Church
 - i) ACVV Collection (V21)
 - ii) Luckhoff Institute Collection (V7)
 - iii) Sinodale Diens vir Barmhartigheid Collection (SKDB)
 - iv) Godsdiensverslae (Religious Reports) (R, RA)
 - v) Marriage Registers for Cape Town, Observatory and Woodstock (G13, G94, G190)

4. University of Stellenbosch Document Centre

M.E. Rothmann Collection (MER)

5. University of Bloemfontein, Institute for Contemporary History

Federale Vroue Raad Collection (PV229)

6. Documents in possession of the Cradock and Uppington ACVV offices

II. Printed Primary Sources

1. Official Records

Cape of Good Hope. *Blue-book of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, 1876* (Cape Town: Saul Solomon, 1877)

Cape of Good Hope. Dept. of Public Education. *Report of the Superintendent-General of Education, 1874* (Cape Town: W.A. Richards and Sons, Govt. Printers, 1875)

Cape of Good Hope. *Results of a census of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, 1891, G6-92* (Cape Town: W.A. Richards & Sons, Govt. Printers, 1892)

Cape of Good Hope. *Debates in the House of Assembly, 1907* (Cape Town: Cape Times, Govt. Printers, 1907)

Cape of Good Hope. *Debates in the House of Assembly, 1908* (Cape Town: Cape Times, Govt. Printers, 1908)

Cape of Good Hope, *Results of a Census of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, 1904. G19-1905* (Cape Town: Cape Times, Govt. Printers, 1905)

South Africa Census Office, *Census of the Union of South Africa, 1911, Part V, Occupations, UG32d-1912* (Pretoria: Govt. Printing and Stationary Office, 1912)

Office of Census and Statistics, *Census of the European or White Races of the Union of South Africa, 1918. Part V, Occupations, UG1-1921* (Cape Town: Cape Times, Govt. Printers, 1921)

Office of Census and Statistics, *Third Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa, 1921, Part VI, Occupations and Industries, UG 37-25* (Pretoria: Govt. Printing and Stationary Office, 1925)

Office of Census and Statistics, *Fourth Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa, 1926, Part XI, Occupations (Europeans), UG27-30* (Pretoria: Govt. Printers, 1930)

Board of Trade and Industries (South Africa) *Report on the Inquiry into the Methods and Costs of Wheatgrowing and Milling (Report no 67)* (Cape Town: Cape Times, Govt. Printers, 1926)

South Africa. Office of Census of Statistics, *Sixth Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa, 1936. Volume 1, Population, UG21-38* (Pretoria: Govt. Printers, 1938)

Cape of Good Hope. Trekpaths Commission, *Report of the Trekpaths Commission, 1936* (Cape Town: the Province, 1936)

Verslag van die Departementele Komitee van Ondersoek oor die Opleiding en Indiensneming van Maatskaplike Werkers, UG.13-1950 (Pretoria: Govt. Printers, 1950)

2. Newspapers and Periodicals

The Argus, 1926

Die Burger, 1917-1984.

Die Brandwag 1910-1916

Die Boerevrou, 1921 - 1926

De Christen 1880-1883

Het Gereformeerde Maandblad 1907-1909

De Goede Hoop, 1903-1917

Huguenot Seminary Annual, 1896

De Huisgenoot (later *Die Huisgenoot*), 1916 - 1956

Die Huisvrou, 1922-1925.

De Kerkbode 1888 - 1925

De Koningsbode 1906

De Middellandsche Afrikaander, 1900

Het Noord-Westelijke Nationalist, 1919

Het Oosten 1900

Journal of the Medical Association of South Africa, 1928

Ons Tijdschrift, 1896

Social and Industrial Review, 1929

South African Medical Record, 1923-1926

De Unie, 1907.

De Vereeniging 1903-1909

De Wekker 1860-1910

Het Westen 1904-1907

De Zendingbode 1897

III. Printed Books and Pamphlets (published before 1940)

Arndt, E.H.D., *The Use of the Chattel Mortgage (Notarial Bond) in Agricultural Finance* (Cape Town: Cape Times, 1932)

Brandt, J., *Het Concentratie Kamp van Irene* (Cape Town: HAUM, 1905)

Brandt, J., *The Petticoat Commando* (London: Mills and Boon, 1913)

De la Rey, J.A., *A Woman's Wanderings and Trials during the Anglo-Boer War* (London: T Fischer Unwin, nd c. 1903)

De la Rey, J.A., *Mijne Omswervingen en Beproevingen gedurende den Oorlog* (Amsterdam: Hoveke and Wormser, nd)

Dreyer, A., *Het Christelijk Huisgezin* (np: by the author, 1898)

Dreyer, A., *Historisch Album van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid Afrika* (Cape Town: Cape Times, 1912)

Greyling, P.F., *Die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk en Armesorg* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1939)

Grosskopf, J.W.F., *The Poor White Problem in South Africa: Report of the Carnegie Commission, Part I. Economic Report: Rural Impoverishment and Rural Exodus* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932)

Hobhouse, E., *The Brunt of the War and Where it Fell* (London: Methuen, 1902)

Hofmeyr, J.H. et al, 'The Dutch Reformed Church and the Boers' (London: National Press Agency, nd c. 1899) in South African Library, *SA Bound Pamphlets* 21(38)

Kestell, J.D., *The Struggle for Freedom, or the Rebellion of Slagters Nek: a Tragedy in five Acts* (London: Wyman, 1881.)

Lewis, T.H., *Women of South Africa, a Historical, Educational and Industrial Encyclopaedia and Social Directory of the Women of the Sub-continent* (Cape Town: Le Quesne and Hooton-Smith, 1913)

MacMillan, W.M., *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development* (Johannesburg: Johannesburg Central News Agency, 1919)

Malherbe, E.G., *Education in South Africa, 1652-1922* (Cape Town: Juta, 1925)

Neethling, E., *Wat dit Beteken om 'n Moeder te wees* (Cape Town: Publikasie Kommissie van die Ned Geref Kerk, 1922)

Neethling, E.N., *Should we Forget?* (Cape Town: HAUM, nd c.1902)

Neethling, M., *Aangenaame Zondagen voor Christelike Huisgezinnen in Zuid-Afrika* (Cape Town: Dusseau, 1898)

Neethling, Maria: *Vergaderde Leliën: Verhalen voor eenige Kinderen in Zuid Afrika die vroeg Vergaderd zijn* (Nijmegen, PJ Milborn, nd c.1900)

Pienaar, P.J., *Ella Neethling deur haar Suster* (Noorder Paarl: Paarl Drukkers, 1927)

Postma, W: *Die Boervrou - Moeder van haar volk*. (Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, 1918)

Reitz, F.W., *A Century of Wrong* (London: Review of Reviews, 1899)

Rompel-Koopman, L., *Verloren en Herwonnen Levens* (Pretoria: Die Volkstem, 1919)

Ross, G.E.N., *Landbou-Krediet: 'n Inleiding tot die Studie van die Probleem van Kredietverskaffing vir die Boer in Suid Afrika* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, nd c.1926)

Rothmann, M.E., *Ons Saamreis* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1930.)

Rothmann, M.E., *Onverantwoordelike Ouerskap* (Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, nd c.1933)

Rothmann, M.E., *The Poor White Problem in South Africa. Report of the Carnegie Commission, Part V: The Mother and Daughter of the Poor Family* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932)

Spijker, A.H., *De Geschiedenis van den Vrouwen Zending Bond of wat God gewrocht heeft, 1889 - 1906* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia Drukkerij, nd c. 1906]

Stockenstrom, E. *Die Vrou in die Geskiedenis van die Hollands-Afrikaanse Volk* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1921)

Totius, *Bij die Monument* (Potchefstroom: AH Koomans, 1908)

Vis, Wilhelmina R., *Tien Maanden in een Vrouwenkamp. Het Leven en Lijden van een Boerengezin in Transvaal tijdens den laatsten Oorlog met Engeland*, (Rotterdam: D.A. Daamen, 1902);

Wagner, O.J.M., *Poverty and Dependency in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1936)

IV. Secondary Sources (published after 1940)

1. Selected Books

Algemene Komitee van die Vrouediens, *NGK Handleiding Dienswerk Vrouelidmate* (Cape Town: NG Kerk Uitgewers, 1983)

Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions, 1983)

Beinart, W. and Delius, P. (eds), *Putting a Plough to the Ground* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986)

Beyers, C.J. (ed.), *S.A. Biografiese Woordeboek, Vol. 4* (Durban: Butterworth, 1981)

Bozzoli, B. (ed.), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987)

- Butler, J., Elphick, R. and Welsh, D. (eds), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1987)
- Cooter, R., *In the Name of the Child. Health and Welfare, 1880-1940* (London: Routledge, 1992)
- Crafford, D., *Aan God die Dank* (Pretoria: NG Kerk Boekhandel, 1982)
- Crais, C.C., *The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1991)
- Cronjé, J.M., *Vroue met Nardusparfuum* (Pretoria: NG Kerk Boekhandel Transvaal, 1984)
- Davenport, T.R.H., *The Afrikaner Bond* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1966)
- Davidoff, L., and Hall, C., *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 1988, p.25)
- De Kiewiet, C.W., *A History of South Africa, Social and Economic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942)
- De Villiers, A., *Barrevoets oor die Drakensberg. Pioniersvroue van die Neëntiende Eeu* (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1975)
- Die Gereformeerde Vroueblad (eds): *Gedenkboek. Die Gereformeerde Vrou, 1859-1959 (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom Herald, 1959)*
- Diederiks, H. and Zuispel, C. (eds) *Onderscheid en Minderheid: Sociaal-historische Opstellen over Discriminatie en Vooroordeel aangeboden aan Professor Dik van Arkel* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1987)
- Du Toit, A. and Giliomee, H., *Afrikaner Political Thought, Vol. 1, 1780 - 1850* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1983)
- Du Toit, B., *Ukubamba Amadolo* (London: Onyx Press, 1978)
- Dubow, S., *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- Epstein, B.L., *The Politics of Domesticity* (Middletown Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981)
- Fildes, V. et al (eds), *Women and Children First: International Maternal and Infant Welfare, 1870-1945* (London: Routledge, 1992)
- Gellner, E., *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983)
- Geyser, O. and Marais, A.H., *Die Nasionale Party (vol.1)* (Pretoria: Academica, 1975)
- Gluck, S. B. and Patai, D. (eds), *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991)
- Goethe, W.H., *Faust, Part II - Sir Theodore Martin Translation* (London: J.M. Dent, 1954)
- Gordon, L. (ed.), *Women, the State and Welfare* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990)

- Heese, J.A., *Gedenkboek van Parow-Moedergemeente, 1917-1967* (Nasionale Handelsdrukkery: Elsiesrivier, nd c.1967)
- Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)
- Hopkins, H.C., *Die Moeder van ons Almal* (Cape Town: NG Kerk Uitgewers, nd c. 1965)
- Hutchison, W.R. and Lehmann, H. (eds), *Many are Chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994)
- Illiffe, J., *The African Poor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)
- James, W. and Simons, M. (eds), *The Angry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989)
- Jayawardena, K., *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1986)
- Koonz, C: *Mothers in the Fatherland. Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (London: Methuen, 1988)
- Kotze, P.W., *Namakwaland. 'n Sosiologiese Studie van 'n Geïsoleerde Gemeenskap* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1943)
- Koven, S. and Michel, S. (eds), *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993)
- Ladd-Taylor, M., *Mother-work: Women, Child Welfare and the State 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994)
- Lewsen, P. (ed.), *Selections from the Correspondence of J.X. Merriman* (Cape Town: The Van Riebeeck Society, 1966)
- Lindeque, R.C., *Gaan Maak Jy Ook So* (Pretoria: NG Kerk Boekhandel, 1985).
- Marks, S. and Rathbone, R. (eds), *Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa* (London: Longman, 1982)
- Marks, S. and Trapido, S. (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987)
- Marks, S., *Divided Sisterhood: Race, Class and Gender in the South African Nursing Profession* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994)
- McCarthy, K.D. (ed.), *Lady Bountiful Revisited. Women, Philanthropy and Power* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1990)
- Mitchell, J. and Oakley, A. (eds), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (London: Penguin Books, 1976)
- Moodie, D.T., *The Rise of Afrikanerdom. Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975)
- Morrell, R. (ed.), *White but Poor. Essays on the History of Poor whites in Southern Africa, 1880-1940* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992)

Muncy, R., *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform: 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)

Nairn, T., *The Break-up of Britain* (London: New Left Books, 1977)

Nuwe FAK Sangbundel (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1961)

O'Meara, D., *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 to 1948* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1983)

Oberholster, J.A.S., *Eeufees-Gedenkboek van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Gemeente Alexandria* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1954)

Pedersen, S.P., *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State, Britain and France 1914-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Pelzer, A.N.P., *Die Afrikaner Broederbond: die Eerste Vyftig Jaar* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1979)

Personal Narratives Group, *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990)

Prochaska, F.K., *Women and Philanthropy in nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980)

Rendall, J., *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860* (Macmillan: Hampshire, 1985)

Rothmann, M.E., *My Beskeie Deel: 'n Outobiografiese Vertelling* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1976)

Samuel, R. and Jones, G.S. (eds) *Culture, Ideology and Politics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982)

Schoeman, K., *Die Wêreld van Susanna Smit, 1799-1863* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1995)

Schoeman, K., *In Liefde en Trou. Die Lewe van President M.T. Steyn en Mev Tibbie Steyn met 'n Keuse uit hulle Korrespondensie*, (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1983)

Schoeman, K., *Olive Schreiner: a Woman in South Africa, 1855-1891* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1991)

Schoeman, K., *Only Anguish to Live Here: Olive Schreiner and the Anglo-Boer War, 1899 - 1902* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1992)

Scholtz, G.D., *Ontwikkeling van die Politieke Denke van die Afrikaner*, 8 vols (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers/Perskor, 1967-1984)

Skocpol, T., *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: The Belknap press of Harvard University Press, 1992)

Searle, C., *The History of the Development of Nursing in South Africa, 1652-1960* (Cape Town: Struik, 1965)

Showalter, E., *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991)

- Stals, E.L.P., *Afrikaners in die Goudstad* (Pretoria: HAUM, 1986)
- Stockenstrom, W., *Abjater wat so Lag* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1991)
- Theron, E. and Lambrechts, H.C., *Vrouevolksdiens* (Cape Town: HAUM, nd c.1956)
- Theron, E., *Fabriekwersters in Kaapstad* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1944)
- Thompson, L., *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985)
- Vail, L. (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989)
- Van der Merwe, P.J., *Trek: Studies oor die Mobiliteit van die Pioniersbevolking aan die Kaap* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1945),
- Van der Watt, F., *Ek Sien haar Wen* (Pretoria: Daan Retief Uitgewers, 1980)
- Van Heerde, G.L., *Die Dag van Kleine Dinge* (Cape Town: NG. Kerk Uitgewers, 1955)
- Van Jaarsveld, F.A., *Die Afrikaner en sy Geskiedenis* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1959)
- Van Jaarsveld, J.A., *Die Afrikaner se Groot Trek na die Stede* (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1982)
- Van Onselen, Charles, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886 - 1914, Volume 1: New Babylon* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982)
- Van Rensburg, A.P., *Moeders van ons volk* (Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, 1966)
- Van Wijk, A.J., *Na Vyf-en-Sewentig Jaar, 1889-1964* (Cape Town: Vroue Sending Bond, nd c. 1964)
- Visser, D.P. (ed.), *Essays on the History of Law* (Cape Town: Juta, 1989)
- Walker, C. (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Claremont: David Philip, 1990)
- Warwick, P. (ed.), *The South African War, 1899-1902* (Harlow: Longman, 1980)
- Yuval-Davis, N. and Anthias, S. (eds), *Woman-Nation-State* (London: MacMillan, 1989)
- Zietsman, P.H., *Die Taal is Gans die Volk: Woelinge en Dryfvere in die Stryd om die Afrikaner se Taal* (Pretoria: UNISA, 1992)

2. Selected Articles and Chapters in Books

- Baker, P., 'The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920', *American Historical Review* 89, 3 (1984)
- Berger, I., 'Solidarity Fragmented: Garment Workers of the Transvaal, 1930-1960' in Marks, S. and Trapido, S. (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987)

Bickford-Smith, V., 'A special Tradition of Multi-Racialism'? Segregation in Cape Town in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries' in James, W. and Simons, M. (eds), *The Angry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989)

Bock, G., 'Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization and the State', *Signs* 8, 3 (1983)

Boris, E., 'The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the "Political"', in Koven, S. and Michel, S. (eds), *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993)

Bozzoli, B., 'Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9, 2 (1983)

Bradlow, E., 'Women and Education in Nineteenth-Century South Africa: The Attitudes and Experiences of Middle-Class English-Speaking Females at the Cape', *South African Historical Journal* 28 (1993)

Breuilli, J., 'Reflections on Nationalism', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 15 (1985)

Brink, E., 'Maar net 'n klomp "factory" meide': Afrikaner Family and Community on the Witwatersrand during the 1920s' in Bozzoli, B. (ed.), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987)

Brink, E., 'Man-made women: Gender, Class and the Ideology of the Volksmoeder', in Walker, C. (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Claremont: David Philip, 1990)

Bundy, C., 'Vagabond Hollanders and Runaway Englishmen: White Poverty in the Cape before Poor Whiteism' in Beinart, W. and Delius, P. (eds), *Putting a Plough to the Ground* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986)

Butler, J., 'Afrikaner Women and the Creation of Ethnicity in a Small South African Town, 1902-1950', in Vail, L. (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989)

Chisholm, L., 'Gender and Deviance in South African Industrial Schools and Reformatories for Girls, 1911-1934' in Walker, C. (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990)

Clark, B., 'History of the Roman-Dutch Law of Marriage from a Socio-Economic Perspective', Visser, D.P. (ed.), *Essays on the History of Law* (Cape Town: Juta, 1989)

Cotteril, P., 'Interviewing women: Issues of Friendship, Vulnerability and Power' in *Women's Studies International Forum* 15, 5/6 (1992)

Davin, A., 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop Journal* 6 (1978)

De Groot, Joanna, 'The Dialectics of Gender: Women, Men and Political Discourses in Iran c. 1890-1930', *Gender and History* 5, 2 (1993)

Du Toit, A., 'The Cape Afrikaners' Failed Liberal Moment' in Butler, J., Elphick, R. and Welsh, D. (eds), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1987)

- Du Toit, A., 'The Construction of Afrikaner Choseness' in Hutchison, W.R. and Lehmann, H. (eds), *Many are Chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994)
- Du Toit, A., 'No Chosen People: the Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology,' *American Historical Review* 88, 4 (1983)
- Dye, N.S., 'Review Essay: History of Childbirth in America', *Signs* 6, 1 (1980)
- Eley, G., 'Nationalism and Social History', *Social History* 6 (1981)
- Eley, G., 'State Formation, Nationalism and Political Culture in Nineteenth-century Germany' in Samuel, R. and Jones, G.S. (eds), *Culture, Ideology and Politics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982)
- Fox-Genovese, E., 'Placing Women's History in History', *New Left Review* 133 (1982)
- Gaitskell, D. and Kimble, J., '"Wailing for Purity": Prayer Unions, African Mothers and Adolescent Daughters, 1912-1940' in Marks, S. and Rathbone, R. (eds), *Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa* (London: Longman, 1982)
- Gaitskell, D. and Unterhalter, E., 'Mothers of the Nation: a Comparative Analysis of Nation, Race and Motherhood in Afrikaner Nationalism and the African National Congress', in Yuval-Davis, N. and Anthias, S. (eds), *Woman-Nation-State* (London: MacMillan, 1989)
- Gaitskell, D., 'Devout domesticity? A century of African Women's Christianity in South Africa', in Walker, C. (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa* (Claremont: David Philip, 1990)
- Giliomee, H., 'The Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1870-1915', *South African Historical Journal*, 19 (1987)
- Haggis, J., 'Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender? Recent Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism', *Women's Studies International Forum* 13, 1/2 (1990)
- Hall, C., '"From Greenland's Icy Mountains ... to Africa's Golden Sand": Ethnicity, Race and Nation in Mid-Nineteenth century England', *Gender and History* 5, 2 (1993)
- Hassim, S., '"Steel in their Souls". The Inkatha Women's Brigade and the Politics of Gender in Natal' (paper presented to the Biennial Conference of the Political Science Association of South Africa, 1991)
- Hassim, S., 'Family, Motherhood and Zulu Nationalism: The Politics of the Inkatha Women's Brigade', *Feminist Review* 43 (1993)
- Hetherington, P., 'Women in South Africa: The Historiography in English', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, 2 (1993)
- Hofmeyr, I., 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity, 1902-1924' in Marks, S. and Trapido, S. (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987)
- Hyslop, J., 'White Working-class Women and the Invention of Apartheid: "Purified" Afrikaner Nationalist agitation for Legislation against "Mixed" Marriages, 1934-9', *Journal of African History* 36 (1995)

Krebs, P. M., 'The last of the Gentlemen's Wars': Women in the Boer War Concentration Camp Controversy', *History Workshop Journal* 33 (1992)

Kessler-Harris, A., 'Women and welfare: Public Interventions in Private Lives', *Radical History Review* 56 (1993)

Klaus, A., 'Depopulation and Race Suicide: Maternalism and Pronatalist Ideologies in France and the United States' in Koven, S. and Michel, S. (eds) *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993)

Koven, S. and Michel, S., 'Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920', *American Historical Review* 95, 4 (1990)

Koven, S., Review of *In the Name of the Child. Health and Welfare, 1880-1940*, *History Workshop Journal* 35 (1993)

Liu, T., 'Teaching Differences among Women from a Historical Perspective: rethinking Race and Gender as Social Categories', *Women's Studies International Forum* 14, 4 (1991)

Marks, S. and Trapido, S., 'The Politics of Race Class and Nationalism' in Marks, S. and Trapido, S. (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987)

McCarthy, K.D., 'Parallel Power Structures: Women and the Voluntary Sphere', in McCarthy, K.D. (ed.), *Lady Bountiful Revisited. Women, Philanthropy and Power* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990)

McClintock, A., 'Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family', *Feminist Review* 44 (1993)

McLean, N., 'White Women and Klan Violence in the 1920s: Agency, Complicity and the Politics of Women's History', *Gender and History* 3, 3 (1991)

Michel, S., 'The Limits of Maternalism: Policies toward American Wage-Earning Mothers During the Progressive Era' in Koven, S. and Michel, S. (eds), *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge 1993)

Miller, R.B., 'Science and Society in the Early Career of H.F. Verwoerd', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19, 4 (1993)

Murphy-Lawless, Jo, 'The Silencing of Women in Childbirth or Let's hear it from Bartholomew and the Boys' (*Women's International Forum*, 1988, V.11 no.4.)

Oakley, A., 'Wisewoman and Medicine Man: Changes in the Management of Childbirth' in Mitchell, J. and Oakley, A. (eds), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (London: Penguin Books, 1976)

Pierson, R., 'Beautiful Soul or Just Warrior: Gender and War', *Gender and History* 1, 1 (1989)

Robert, Dana L., 'Mount Holyoke Women and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission Movement, 1874 - 1904', *Missionalia* 21, 2 (1993)

Ross, R., 'The Fundamentalisation of Afrikaner Calvinism', in Diederiks, H. and Zuisspel, C. (eds) *Onderscheid en Minderheid: Sociaal-historische Opstellen over Discriminatie en Vooroordeel aangeboden aan Professor Dik van Arkel*, (Hilversum: Verloren, 1987)

Sapiro, V., 'The Gender Basis of American Social Policy', in Gordon, L. (ed.), *Women, the State and Welfare* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990)

Saunders, C., 'Putting the History of White Poverty in South African on the Agenda', *South African Historical Journal* 28 (1993)

Scott, Anne Firor, 'Women's Voluntary Associations: from Charity to Reform' in McCarthy, K.D. (ed.), *Lady Bountiful Revisited. Women, Philanthropy and Power* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990)

Scott, J.W., 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991)

Sen, S., 'Gender and Nationalism in Bengal', *Gender and History* 5, 2 (1993)

Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, 'Introduction: "Mother Worlds"', in Koven, S. and Michel, S. (eds), *Mothers of a New World : Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge 1993)

Sklar, K.K., 'The Historical Foundations of Women's Power in the Creation of the American Welfare State, 1830-1930' in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (eds), *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993)

Spies, S.B., 'Women and the War' in Warwick, P. (ed.), *The South African War, 1899-1902* (Harlow: Longman, 1980)

Tamarkin, M., 'Nationalism or "Tribalism": the Evolution of Cape Afrikaner Ethnic Consciousness in the late Nineteenth Century', *Nations and Nationalism* 1, 2 (1995)

Taylor, J., '"Our Poor": the Politicisation of the Poor White Problem, 1932-1942', *Kleio* 24 (1992)

Varikas, E., 'Gender and National Identity in *Fin de siècle* Greece', *Gender and History* 5, 2 (1993)

Walker, C., 'Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945: An Overview' in Walker, C. (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa* (Claremont: David Philip, 1990)

3. Unpublished Articles and Theses

Bottomley, J., 'Public policy and white rural poverty in South Africa, 1881-1924' (Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, 1990)

Bradford, H., '"Her Body, her Life": a Hundred Years of Abortion in South Africa' (paper presented at Conference on Women and Gender in South Africa, 1991)

Brink, E., 'The Afrikaner Women of the Garment Workers' Union, 1918-1939' (M.A. dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1986)

Butler, J., 'Afrikaner Women, Social Welfare and Education in a Small South African Town, 1920-1939' (paper presented to the International Conference on the History of Ethnic Awareness in Southern Africa, Charlottesville, 1983.)

Du Plessis, J.P., 'Colonial Progress and Countryside Conservatism: an Essay on the Legacy of Van der Lingen of Paarl, 1831-1875' (M.A. dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1988)

Du Toit, A., 'An Also Chosen People' (Mimeo, 1994)

Eisenberg, B.Y., 'Gender, Class and Afrikaner Nationalism: the South African Vrouefederasie' (Honours dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987)

Elias, C.M., 'A Comparative Analysis of Government Housing Policy and Cape Town City Council Housing Policy' (M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1980)

Gaitskell, D., 'Female Mission Initiatives: Black and White Women in three Witwatersrand Churches, 1903-1939' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1981)

Hexham, I., 'Totalitarian Calvinism - The Reformed (Dopper) Community in South Africa, 1902-1919' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Bristol, 1975)

Hofmeyr, I., 'Popularising history: the Case of Gustav Preller' (Johannesburg: African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, 1987)

Hugo, G.E., 'Die Voorgeskiedenis van die Godsdienstige Herlewing op Worcester in 1860 - 1861' (B.D. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1952)

Joyce, J.P., 'Cape Town and the Origins of the Slums Act of 1934' (Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1981)

Kruger, J.J., 'The State Provision of Social Security: some Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Perspectives with Reference to South Africa' (B.Comm. dissertation, Stellenbosch, 1990)

Kruger, L., 'Gender, Community and Identity: Women and Afrikaner nationalism in the Volksmoeder discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919-1931' (M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1991)

Lambrechts, H.C., 'Die Eerste Vyftig Jaar: die Ontwikkeling van die Werk van die Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging', (Ph.D. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1957)

Le Roux, P., 'Poor Whites' (Paper presented at the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, 1984)

Mabin, Alan, 'The Course of Economic Development in the Cape Colony, 1854-99. A Case of Truncated Transition' (paper presented at the third Biennial Conference of the Economic History Society of Southern Africa, Durban, 1984)

Nicol, M., 'A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers in Cape Town, 1900-1939' (Ph. D. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984)

Rauch, G.: 'Die Optrede en Verantwoording van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika' (M.A. dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1979)

Van der Watt, L., 'Art, Gender Ideology, and Afrikaner nationalism: A History of the Voortrekker Tapestries' (M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1996)

Van Wyk, W.E. 'Die Bediening van Dr. A.D. Luckhoff as Armsorgsekretaris van die Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk' (M.A. dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1986)

4. Pamphlets

ACVV Hoofbestuur, *Onderhandelinge tussen ACVV en Kerklike overheid in Kaapland* (Paarl: Paarl Drukkers Maatskappy, 1949)

Forty Years of service: The Citizen's Housing League (Cape Town, np, 1970)

Kruger, N., *The Voortrekker Tapestry in the Museum of the Voortrekker Monument* (Johannesburg: The Board of Control of the Voortrekker monument, 1961)

V. Interviews cited in the text

Abel, M., Upington, 17 June 1990.

Bailie, J., Ysterplaat (Cape Town), 4 Oct. 1991.

Beukes, H.K., Milnerton (Cape Town), 8 Nov. 1991.

Driver, A., Milnerton (Cape Town), 8 Nov. 1991.

Du Plessis, M., Eersterivier, 16 March 1992

Du Toit, E., Paarl, 28 Sept. 1989.

Erasmus, G. , Cradock, 27 June, 1991.

Geldenduys, S., Cape Town, 2 Aug. 1991.

Groenewald, L., Cape Town, 15 Aug. and 25 Oct. 1991.

Lambrechts, H.C., Cape Town, 8 Aug. 1991.

Malan, S., Upington, 18 June 1990

Nolte, A., Upington, 19 June 1990.

Retief, W.A., Cape Town, 12 Aug. 1991.

Rossouw, J.M., Cape Town, 4 Oct. 1991.

Stamroodt, M., Cape Town, 18 Oct. 1991.

Swart, I., Cape Town, 18 Oct. 1991.

Van Heerden, M., Cradock, 26 June, 1991.

Van Zyl, H.P.E., Observatory (Cape Town), 23 Aug. 1991

Wileman, F. de Waal, Milnerton (Cape Town), 31 Oct. 1991.

VI. Illustrations

Plate 1, Carte de visite, c. 1878, South African Library Photographic Collection, PHA: Children.

Plate 2. Huguenot Seminary Graduates, Cape Archives, Jeffreys Collection, J10978.

Plate 3 Elizabeth Roos, ACVV President, Cape Archives, AG Collection, AG13780

Plate 4 Delegates to the ACVV congress, 1906, Cape Archives, AG Collection, AG 15396.

Plate 5 Delegates to the ACVV congress, 1910, *De Goede Hoop*, May 1910.

Plate 6. Portrait of Margaretha de Beer, *De Goede Hoop*, July 1909.

Plate 7. Portrait of the Family Claassens, *De Goede Hoop*, 1 July 1914.

Plate 8. 'Op weg na die Vrouemonument', *Die Huisgenoot*, Jan. 1919.

Plate 9. 'Die Voortrekkervrouw', *Die Huisgenoot*, Jan. 1919.

Plate 10. The winner of the 'Voortrekker Woman's Wear' competition, *Die Huisgenoot*, Jan. 1919.

Plate 11. Teacher and pupils of farm school, district Sutherland, South African Library Photographic Collection, PHA: Education

Plate 12. Family in Yorkshire Estate, South African Library Photographic Collection, PHA: CT. Social Conditions

Plates 13 - 16. Portraits of Francina Wileman, her sisters and parents, copies of photographs belonging to Mrs F. Wileman (Milnerton, Cape Town)

Plate 17. The ACVV executive, 1929, Cape Archives, AG Collection, AG13788.

Plate 18. M.E. Rothmann with her son and daughter (USDC, M.E. Rothmann Collection)

Plate 19. How Magrieta should dress, *Die Huisvrou*, 2 May 1922.

Plate 20. 'Die Sielkunde van Aantrek', *Die Huisgenoot*, 9 July 1926.

Plate 21. 'n Paar van ons Grootste Meisies', *Die Boerevrou*, Jan. 1926.

Plate 22. 'n Paar van ons Kinders op pad van skool na die leeskamer', *Social and Industrial Review*, 5 Sept. 1929.

Plate 23. Poster advertising ACVV hostel, CA, A1953, 2/39.

Plate 24. Rothmann on one of her journeys as organising secretary, Cape Archives, AG Collection, AG17132

Plate 25. Mrs Lou Malan, Erica Cloete and Erica Lutz, copy of photograph belonging to Mrs S. Malan, Upington.

Plate 26. Wreath-laying ceremony at the Vrouemonument, *Die Burger*, 10 July 1933.